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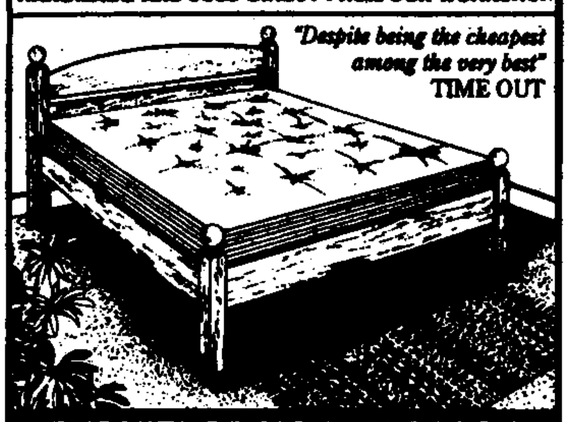

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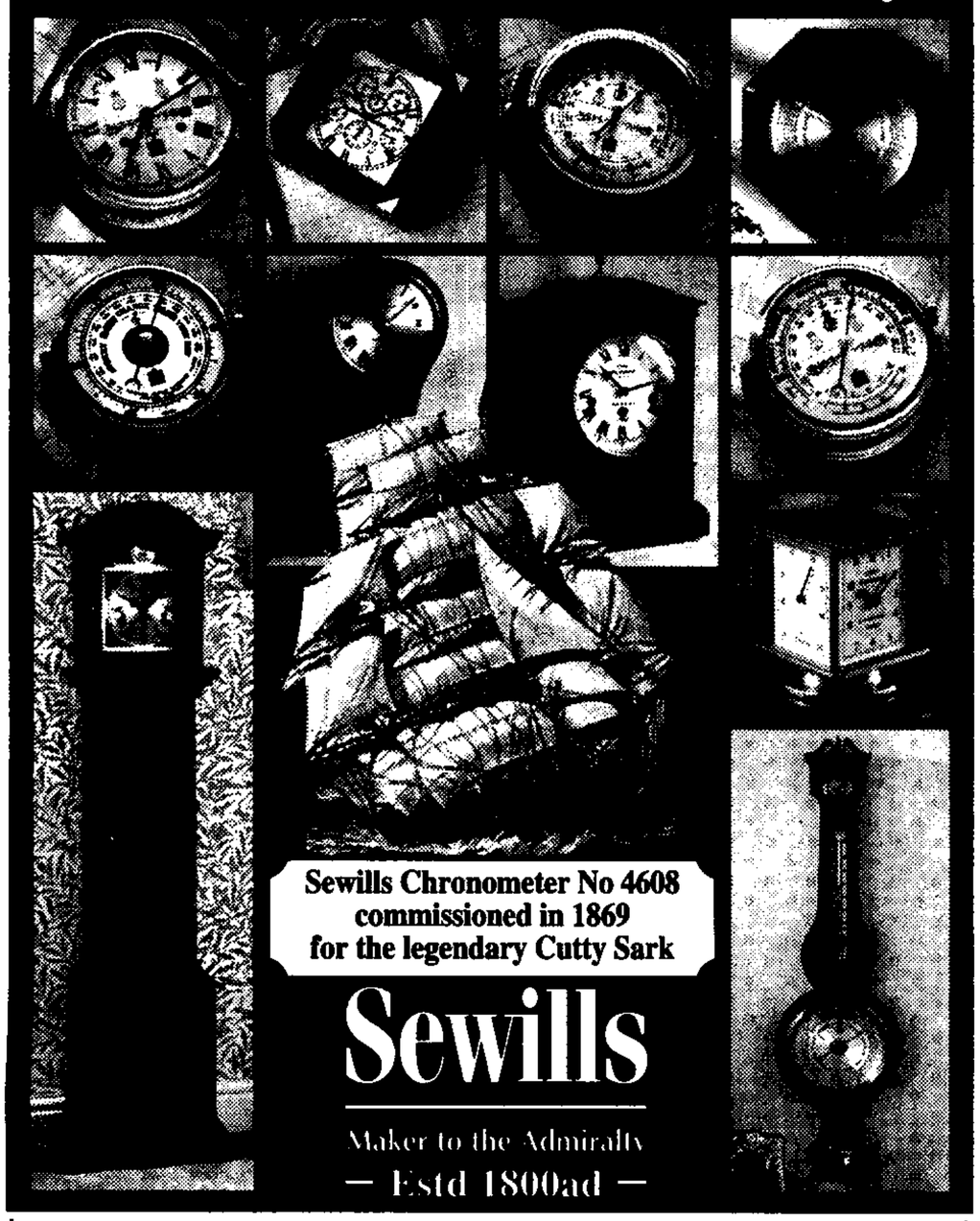

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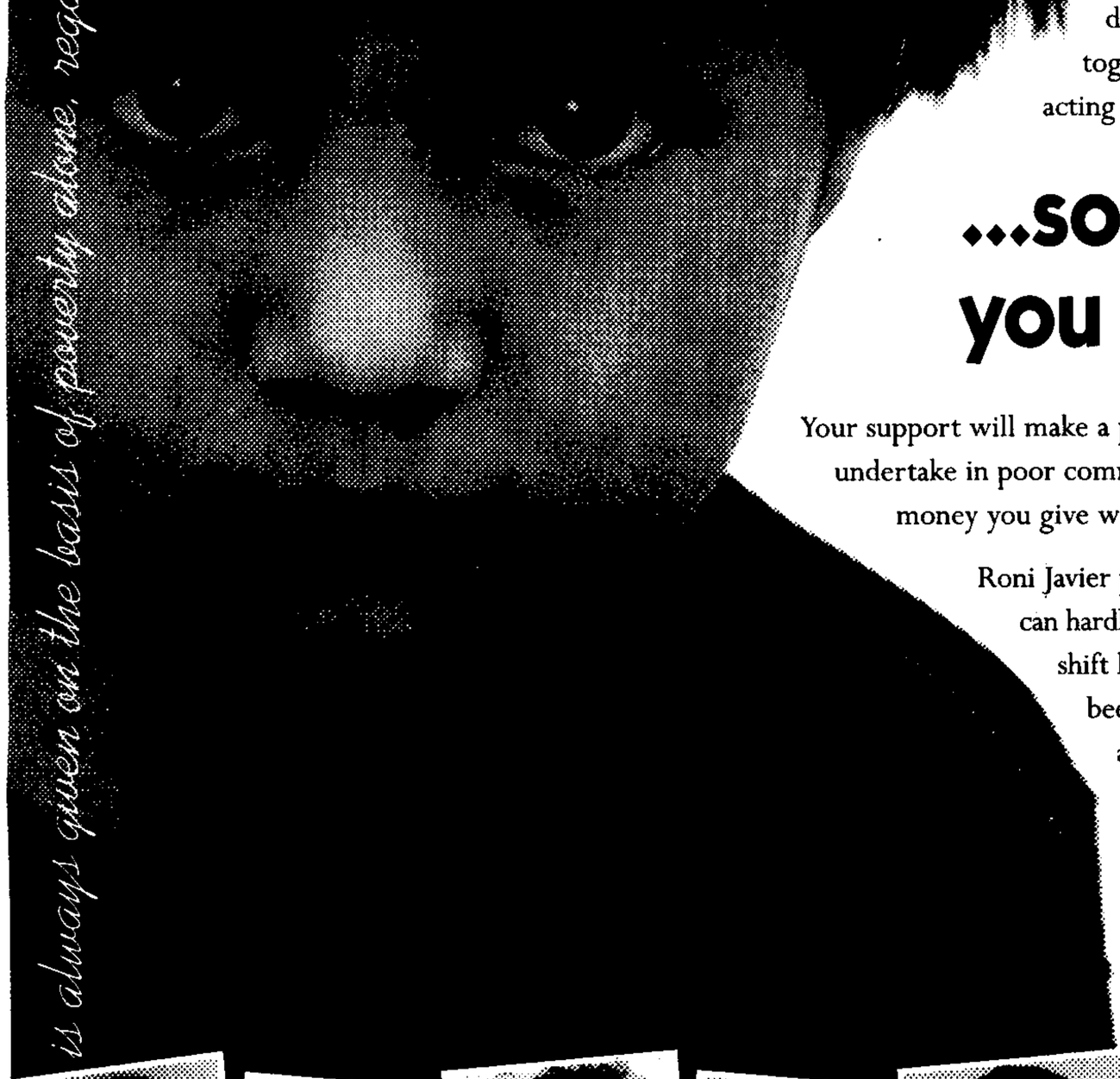

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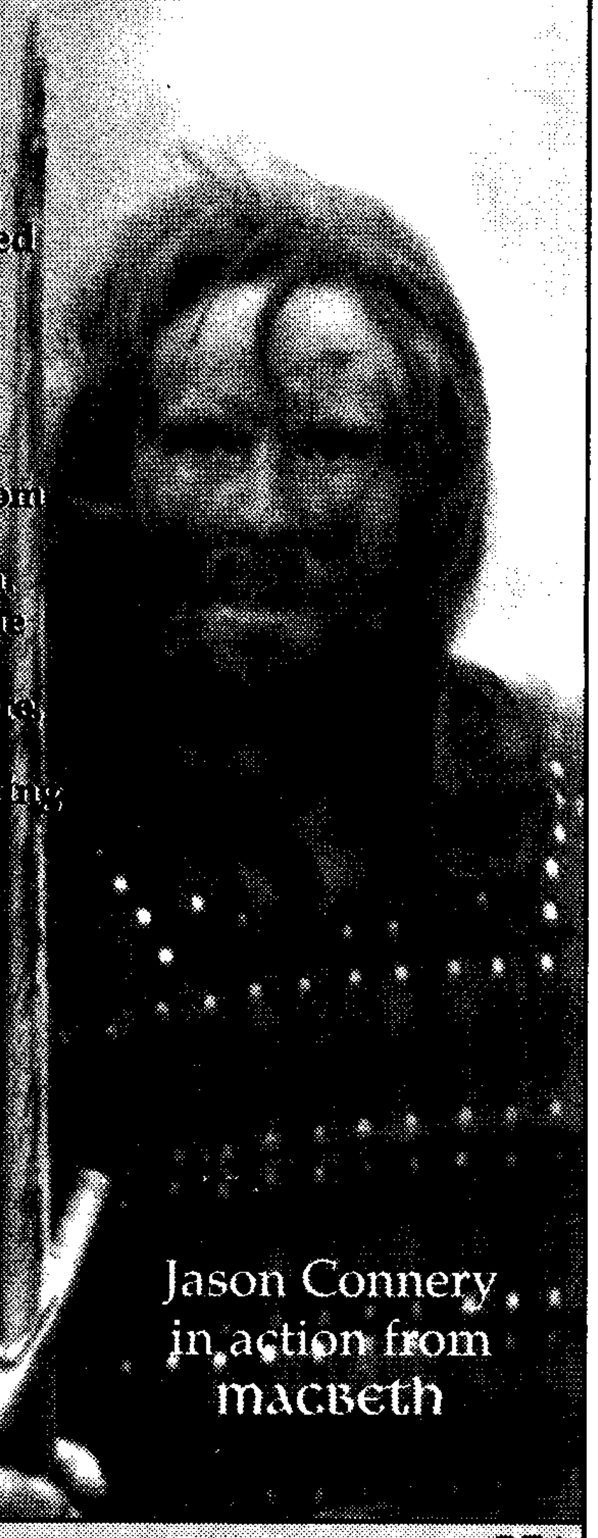

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Gnome

MY HISTORIC decision, following a number of confidential lunches with Mr Blair, to support the Labour party in the House of Lords is a purely personal one. I have the highest regard for Mr Blair and consider his first few weeks in office as a triumph of the highest order.

Let me however make it clear that my decision will in no way be reflected in my newspapers.

The Editors of these papers will as always be entirely free to make whatever comment they see fit on the *political* issues of the day. Any other action would be no more than proprietorial interference which I wholeheartedly deplore.

E. Strobes
Lord Rothergnome
The Working Men's Club
Huddersfield
(Surely some mistake? E.S.)

In Today's Daily Gnome

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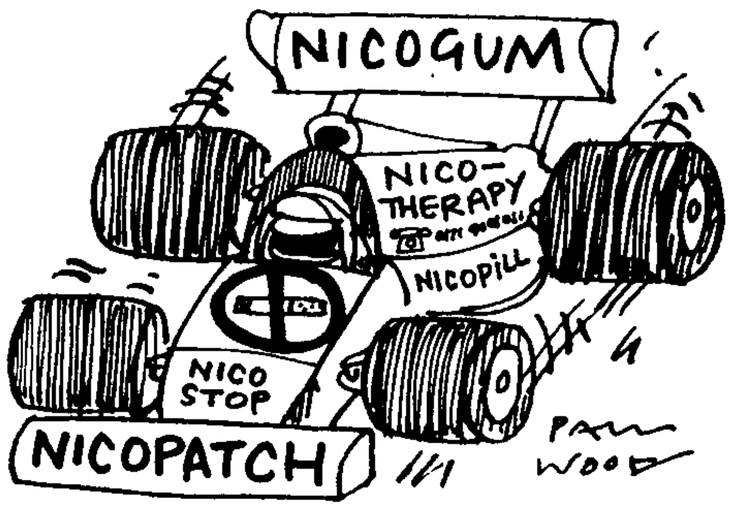

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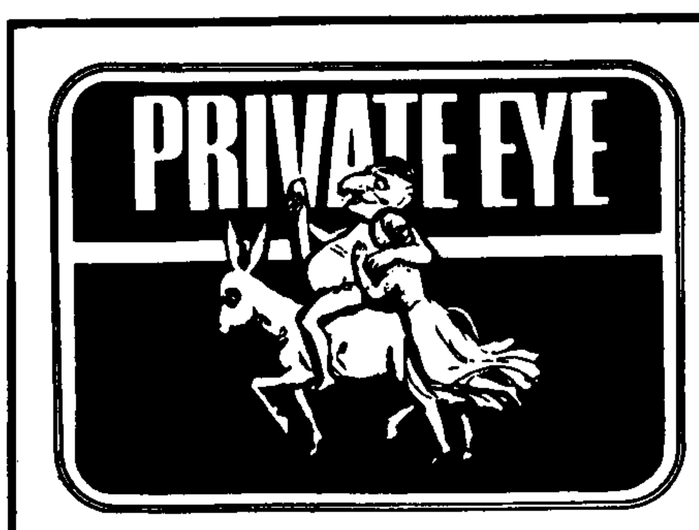

COLOUR SECTION

BALLS-AITKEN

ON THE day after the election, as their client recovered from the shock of losing his 11,500 majority at Thanet South, lawyers for former cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken went to the high court to beg Mr Justice Popplewell to take charge, without a jury, of Aitken's historic libel action against the *Guardian* and Granada's *World in Action*.

The application surprised both defendants, who recalled the heroic speech of the former chief secretary to the treasury when they first made allegations about his relationship with Saudi princes. Aitken promised that with the help of "the shining sword of truth and the trusty shield of British fair play" he would root out the cancer of corrupt journalism as evidenced by the *Guardian* and *World in Action* allegations. Aitken added that he would be proud to submit himself to a "court and jury" while defending his reputation.

Mr Justice Popplewell, 70 (whose wife used to be a leading Tory in Buckinghamshire — see *Eye* 915, of 10 January this year, for her brave defence of the despised principal of Wycombe and Amersham College), was quick to agree that he is perfectly qualified to hear the whole case and decide on liability and the level of damages without the help of a jury.

Guardian and Granada lawyers were horrified. The whole case, they argued, depended on the credibility of Aitken, which was far more appropriately assessed by a jury than by a judge. They appealed to the court of appeal, where the lord chief justice agreed that the key issue was Aitken's credibility — but then decided that a jury should be dispensed with because of the volume of documents.

Thus Aitken has highlighted a little-used principle of English law: that either party in a libel action whose case involves a lot of documents can knock out a jury.

THE LIST of relevant documents in the case has certainly grown enormously in recent weeks as the government has responded to the defendants' demands for discovery. Increasingly, the libel case, which if it comes to court will last several weeks, seems certain to uncover hitherto unknown facts about Aitken's long business experience, especially his association with the billionaires who run Saudi Arabia.

Among the documents under subpoena is the sensitive report of the national audit office (NAO) into kickbacks and bribes from the enormous Al Yamamah arms deal signed for Britain by Margaret Thatcher in 1985 and 1988. The NAO report was censored by the chairman (Labour) and vice-chairman (Tory) of the Commons public accounts committee on the ground that its revelations would jeopardise too many British jobs.

The NAO, which pretends to be a "watchdog" for the public interest, is resisting the subpoena for this report, pleading, er, parliamentary privilege. But even if the authorities manage to stifle the actual report, an enormous amount of information about Aitken's role in the arms deals and his friendship with the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Abdullah, and the king's son Prince Mohammed, is certain to emerge during the former chief secretary's very long cross-examination.

Another embarrassing subject on which a great pile of new information has been collected for the trial is Aitken's chairmanship of the breakfast television company TV-am in the early 1980s. From Curacao in the Dutch Antilles where th. patriot Aitken registered so many of his interests comes the truth about the heavy, and illegal, Saudi investment in the television company and Mr Aitken's relationship to that control, said to be "total". It was the extent of that control which led to Jonathan Aitken's split with his cousin Tim Aitken. Moreover, much more is likely to come out about the real reasons for Aitken's famous trip to the Ritz hotel in Paris in 1993, and the mysterious brunette who paid his bill there.

Every day the Aitken libel action seems to be sinking faster and faster into what is known in the trade as the "Hamilton pit". Neil Hamilton, who also paid a less mysterious visit to the Ritz in Paris, sued the *Guardian*, but, after floods of documents were released from government offices, withdrew just before the action came to court last year to be denounced on the *Guardian* front page as a liar and a cheat. Aitken's case is unlikely to collapse quite so mercilessly, but in the week the *Eye* goes to press more documents are due from the ministry of defence where Aitken was made minister for defence procurement (arms sales) by John Major in 1992. The sad possibility is that the Saudi government, which is accustomed to absolute secrecy, may take flight from all this discovery and that the case will never be contested in open court.

MEANWHILE Aitken presses on with the political priority of the day: the Tory leadership election. The MP's glamorous house in Lord North Street, Westminster, has been put at the disposal of the campaign of Michael Howard, the former home secretary. Howard's view is that he will gratefully accept support wherever it comes from, especially from a former cabinet colleague with such close associations with British intelligence.

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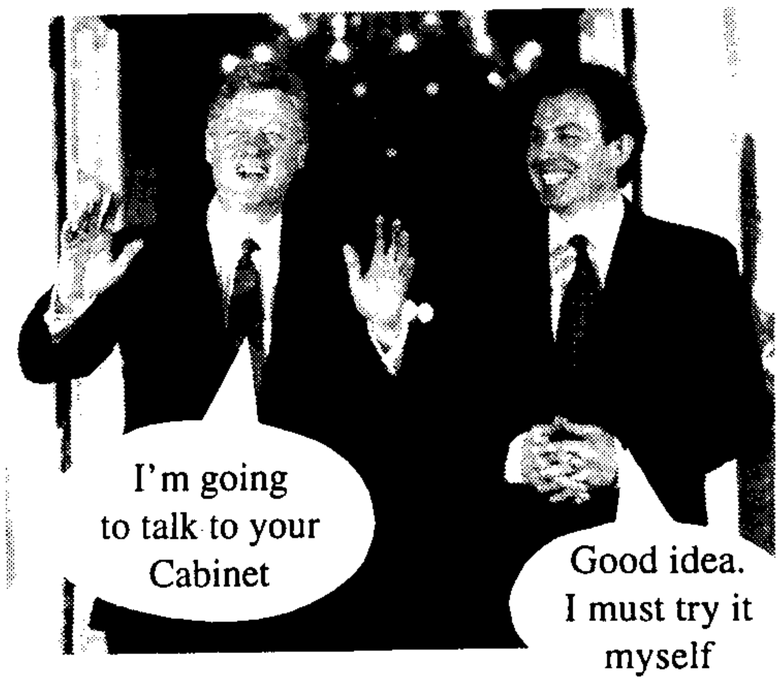
CLINTON FLIES IN



NEWS

ROISIN McALISKEY was not the first "suspect" to be named by intelligence experts in the Royal Ulster Constabulary following the bombing last June of the British barracks in Osnabruck, Germany. The first was an Irish actor called James Corry.

A warrant for Corry's arrest was sworn in the federal court of justice at Karlsruhe, Germany. Corry was arrested in Dublin last autumn and remanded in custody pending extradition. His situation looked bleak. The warrant stated that his fingerprints were found in the holiday cottage where the bombers' gang is alleged to have stayed.

The Irish justice minister ruled, however, that no Irish citizen could be extradited to Germany since the German government had insisted in the extradition treaty between the two countries that in no circumstances would they extradite a German citizen for trial in another country. Mr Corry could, however, be tried in Ireland for explosives offences in another country — so the Irish prosecutors asked the German investigators for the evidence against Corry, including the fingerprints. Whoops! The Germans could not produce any of it. The whole case collapsed.

As in Corry's case, it has been alleged that Roisin McAliskey's fingerprints have been found in incriminating circumstances in Germany — though the exact place they were found appears still to be in doubt. The German authorities won't disclose the alleged prints. Moreover, the manager of the holiday house, Manfred Schmidt, who is stated in the arrest warrant to have identified Ms McAliskey as the woman in the suspect team, has now vehemently denied on German television that he did any such thing.

The RUC special branch, whose intelligence led to Roisin's interrogation and arrest, is hoping that a stronger case can be made against her than against James Corry. So is Scotland Yard's extradition squad, and the lawyers for the crown prosecution service (CPS) who have so tenaciously argued that McAliskey should spend her pregnancy in one of the grimmest prisons in Europe. And so do the stipendiary magistrates and judges who, up until the very moment of the birth, refused her bail.

THE day after Michael Portillo's downfall as MP for Enfield his chum Michael Blagden, principal of local Southgate College, put out a terse memo stating that 45 lecturers were to be sacked.

His actions weren't simply down to pique at Portillo's dismissal from power. For some months Blagden had been fighting the lecturers' wishes to stay on old contracts, which entitled them to old fashioned things like regulated breaks and limits to the number of hours in the working day.

Since refusing to change contract the lecturers have had their pay frozen. Happily Portillo's friend has not suffered the same fate. His salary has been whooshing up since the college was incorporated in 1993. It now tops £80,000 a year. A recent survey put the average principal's salary at £45,000 to £50,000.

Mr Blagden also has a company car and has recently moved office: away from the clamour of the main college site to the appropriately named "The Mansion", where his office with en-suite bathroom is lavish, not to mention larger than some of the classrooms. He has a few allies at the college — his son is the "multi-media coordinator" and his secretary was recently promoted to be personnel officer — but his wage-frozen lecturers are less happy.

SOUTHAMPTON FC has lost its manager Graham Souness and director of football Lawrie McMenemy because it refused to spend money on new players. The amount Souness wanted is said to be £7m.

Can this be the same board of Southampton FC whose members, according to *Eye* 917, enriched themselves beyond their wildest dreams last year when the club was "floated" and taken over by a Bristol company specialising in old peoples' homes?

Guy Askham's shares, which cost him £3,500, were suddenly worth £1.5m, and the holding of the other four directors, which cost them £2,650, were suddenly worth £1m each.

And the answer is, er, yes it can.

Street of Shame

"THERE must be more to us than our bodily functions," female readers of the *Daily Telegraph* are reassured by Barbara Amiel — a well-known feminist who is employed entirely on her merits and most certainly *not* because she happens to be married to the paper's owner.

"It's no news to us that we are not entirely spiritual creatures," she continues, "but it was reassuring to think that we aspired to and derived our dignity and pride from the idea that we were more than our menstrual cycles or underarm odour."

Alas, the message has yet to reach her colleagues elsewhere in Canary Wharf. Shortly after the election, the *Sunday Telegraph* rang Germaine Greer and invited her to write a piece about the effect of having so many women in Parliament. "The angle we're interested in," the commissioning editor explained, "is that women in groups tend to have synchronised menstrual cycles..." Greer's reply was, as Sam Goldwyn might have put it, in two words: "Puh-*leeze*."

Meanwhile the *Daily Telegraph*'s obituary of Laurie Lee noted that he spent his formative years with a lot of women — "an experience which quite failed to put him off the opposite sex". As Barbara Amiel would no doubt confirm, they just love women at the *Telegraph*...

POST-ELECTION despair settles in at the plummeting *Express*. Following the Tories' massacre, hacks no longer know what "line" to take (or where to get stories).

The result of all this angst was a three-page letter last week to heads of department from editor Richard "Monk" Addis in which he digressed at length on "weak puns" and "mildwed (*mildewed? Ed.*) assumptions". Threatening to destroy half a century of great *Express* tradition, he even thundered: "It is no good believing one thing privately and foisting halftruths on our public."

Addis concluded plaintively: "We need to find our voice..." But first his hacks need to locate their elusive editor. Keen to impress an important guest, Addis instructed his claret-guzzling Irish gossip columnist, William "hic!" O'Hickey, to provide a suitable female companion for the luncheon. A leering O'Hickey promptly ordered attractive young hackette Charlotte Edwards to present herself, in short skirt and revealing blouse, to the editor. "But how will I recognise him?" she wailed.

Addis's only real innovation, the introduction of Tamara Beckwith to do a "Problem Page" for the *Express*' dire "Look" section, has been terminated after several months. Only two readers wrote in.

IT IS gratifying to see that advancing middle age hasn't blunted Garry Bushell's boyish sense of fun. Following his typically sensitive treatment of schizophrenia in a recent column, the *Sun*'s resident yob-pundit took a phone-call of complaint from an outraged reader. With no hint of remorse, Bushell replied: "Didn't you ring up five minutes ago as someone else?"

NEWS that telephone watchdog ICSTIS has recorded a five-fold rise in the number of complaints about telephone chatlines and smut services was widely reported on TV, radio and the newspapers. "This huge increase comes as more and more pornographic material is carried on international lines," observed the *Daily Mail*.

But two newspapers in particular failed to mention the story — the *Express* (prop: Lord Stevens of Porn) and the *Daily Star* (prop: Lord Stevens of Porn) where the inclusion of 31 adverts for lines offering "masturbation tips" and "restraint games" meant that some stories had to be dropped for lack of space.

***MIRROR* assistant editor Tina Weaver, though pencil thin, only lunches on a modest salad from the office canteen. While queuing, she also usually pops half a dozen chips on her plate. Last week, however, Weaver was astonished to be charged £1.20 instead of the normal 70p for her salad. "The chips," sniffed the till assistant. "We're charging full portion."**

Outraged, the hackette demanded to see the manager, who was equally adamant that the hugely paid *Mirror* executive should pay the extra 50p. "Do you know who I am?" demanded la Weaver, whereupon she was dryly informed: "Look, you've been doing this for months. Want to see the video?"

MAX "Hitler" Hastings, liberator of Port Stanley, is not always totally fearless.

One of his staff at the *Evening Standard*, an Essex girl in Classified Ads, is usually picked up after work by her father, Essexman personified, in his huge Range Rover. Recently this gentlemen was astonished when "Hitler" bounded into the back seat and, mistaking him for his chauffeur, roared: "Come on, man, go!"

Essexman turned and snarled: "Get the fuck out of my car, shithead!"

And, surprisingly swiftly, Max did.

IN A long feature for the *Guardian*, ageing harpie Lucretia Stewart reminisces about her year as literary editor of *Punch*. "It was not always clear what [Peter] McKay wanted," she grumbles. " 'You're filling the Books Pages with homosexuals,' he would cry week in week out'."

Oddly, she neglects to mention McHackey's main complaint about her pages. A few weeks into his editorship, he noticed that almost all the payments for book reviews were being sent via one literary agency — Rogers, Coleridge & White.

Why, he demanded, was la Stewart commissioning so many pieces from clients of this firm? "Darling," she replied, "it's because *all* the best writers in Britain are represented by Rogers, Coleridge & White."

On making further inquiries, McHackey discovered that the client-list of Rogers, Coleridge & White included a certain Lucretia Stewart.

OUR fearless national press is suffering from a sudden attack of coyness.

At the *Mail on Sunday*, for instance, a hackette has spent much of the past few weeks chatting to the former home office minister Charles Wardle, who has many fascinating and damaging tales to tell about his old boss Michael Howard. So far, however, nothing has appeared. Presumably the paper's failure to publicise Wardle's allegations has no connection with the fact that the *Mail on Sunday* has always been rather keen on Michael Howard.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"*Focus*. We want writers, we want ideas, we want tips. *Focus*, the magazine for men who want more than their hormones stimulated."

— Newsletter of the Association of British Science Writers, April 1997.

"*Focus* is following the lead of *FHM* and *loaded* by trialling a bikini-clad cover girl on its front page in the hope that sex is a guaranteed circulation booster."

— UK Press Gazette, May 97.

CURSE OF HELLO!

THE Curse of *Hello!* has struck again — this time against Sherrie Hewson, the *Coronation Street* actress who was the subject of several pages in the recent edition.

As Sherrie confided about her character Maureen: "I love being Maureen and, now Reg has deserted her, we all think it's time for her to blossom and go from strength to strength." She continued gushingly: "I'm very proud and delighted to be in *Coronation Street*."

Alas before the mag had even gone to press the *Mirror* was reporting that "three more *Coronation Street* stars were axed last night... Sherrie Hewson will leave in October."

GIVEN the recent cretinism of the *Mirror*, commentators were stunned by the paper's election-day issue: VOTE FOR THEM, **a credible impression of a Labour-supporting paper. After all, in a speech that night to hacks at Davy's wine bar, editor Piers "Boy" Morgan confessed: "It's been very difficult for me, a Tory voter from a Tory family."**

So how did he confound the critics (and all previous evidence) that he was obsessed with soap opera and pop trivia? In interviews, Morgan has claimed they'd been working on the VOTE FOR THEM issue "for weeks." Er, not exactly.

Executives had no idea what to do. In desperation, the day before polling day, deputy editor Brendon "Chucky" Parsons made an unaccustomed visit to the library — and pulled out the *Mirror* edition for the last election over which former editor Richard Stott *had* laboured for weeks. The 1992 Mirror front (and every other) page screamed: "THINK OF THEM."

The rest is history.

TO CELEBRATE the onset of summer, the *Sunset Times* motoring pages two weeks ago carried a feature about convertibles by one Dave Selby. "If you want to be mean and roofless, there are thousands of classics to choose from," he reported.

After spouting the usual gush about soft-top cars that you find everywhere at this time of year, he concluded with a lengthy plug for the Collector's Car Auction List Fax-U-Back Service (call charge: 50p per minute), which must have been awfully grateful for the free advert.

So who is the brains behind this premium-rate service? Step forward, er, Dave Selby.

IN A recent birthdays column the *Sun* congratulated heroes like Jack Charlton and Gary Glitter on their special day. More interesting was its "Happy Birthday to... boxing legend Sonny Liston, 55."

Er, the pugilist is indeed a sporting legend but unfortunately he is also a dead sporting legend and has been for some years. Perhaps the *Sun* should be told.

O·B·N

So the seagull has taken flight with the trawlers and left a tidal wave of sadness in his wake.

That was no way to leave, not for a super hero.

Eric Cantona's parting from Manchester United was typical of the man.

It was in keeping with his remarkable and controversial career in this country where, near as dammit, he proved that a player could indeed be bigger than a club...

JOHN SADLER
Sun

CONTRIBUTOR: F.H.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! HOW SPLENDID my fat friend Lord Rothermere is to join me in the House of Lords, on the Labour benches!

Nothing hypocritical about this grotesque U-turn. Nor any contradiction with a memo sent only days previously to execs on His Lordship's organ, the *Evening Standard*: "Management is concerned about the possibility of union organization."

New Labour, New Lordships!

HALLO! TO the Bodleian Library, Oxford. We've been summoned, via exquisitely embossed invitations, by the Dirty Digger — to celebrate the 5th year of the "Rupert Murdoch Scholars."

This splendidly philanthropic scheme allows young intellectuals to work, for pocket money during summer vacations, in such revered institutions of further education as the *Sun* and *News of the Screws*.

Alas, Rupe cannot be present. But he sends along wee Peter Stothard, editor of the *Times*, who hands out commemorative "clock towers," a cheap watch on the end of a chrome stick — exactly the sort of tasteful gift one would expect from Rupert.

However mine, inexplicably, stops ticking immediately.

HALLO! SWAMPY, clearly a future prime minister, has suffered an untimely hiccup in his irresistible rise.

The eco-warrior's brief career as columnist for a national newspaper has suddenly ended. The *Sunday Mirror* (editor: Bridget "Death" Rowe) paid Swampy £500 a column until sister paper *The People* told her it was about to try to rubbish poor old Swampy by suggesting that the little fellow augmented his meagre income by selling drugs to fellow tunnellers. (Surely they all share them out? Ed).

Rowe, who is also editor-in-chief of *The People*, ordered that the story be spiked but sacked Swampy anyway. Perhaps "Death" was just relieved to return to her original instincts. Only weeks before hiring him she had told fellow executives: "Swampy should be left under the road to die."

HALLO! TO the Sony Radio Awards, where I am delighted to see my friend David Mellor has been asked to give out the awards despite being completely washed-up politically and yesterday's man.

Naturally we are all extremely upset when brave David is heckled by an unfunny and unpleasant young person who shouts: "Give us a toe-job!"

Sadly, there was interference too in David's live sports phone-in programme on Five Live when the usual inane stream of drivel (*"intelligent post-match analysis", shurely?*) was interrupted by a caller shouting: "Out! Out! Out!" — rather as the frightfully rude Sir James Goldsmith did when David lost his Putney seat.

With the very real prospect of receiving a string of unhelpful telephone calls about toe jobs, Marmite and other intrusions, David did the decent thing and stuck with "safe" callers like Diddy David Hamilton and Geoffrey Boycott. Ever the pro, even David couldn't hide the strain in his voice, however, when reminding listeners of the number to call — 0500 909693. And, Mellor-lovers, here's that number again: 0500 909693!

HALLO! TO ITALY, with the Duchess of Fergiana. She forms a charming trio — with Michael Jackson and Luciano Pavarotti — to graciously hand out awards for the local TV "Oscars".

La Fergiana may not be a prophet in her own land, but she is adored (and highly paid) elsewhere on the planet. The duchess, interviewed for the live transmission with an interpreter present, is asked if she manages to take her children to school every day. Replied Fergiana: "I try to take them and pick them up, but it is quite difficult at the moment because I'm a single mother, so I have a lot of work to do."

Though she gushed on (and on) in this vein, her visibly embarrassed interpreter condensed La Freebiana's lament to a single terse sentence : "She has the commitments of a duchess."

Eyties can be so charmingly diplomatic, don't you find?

HALLO! *JEMIMA Khan (née Goldsmith) and Laetitia Cash, daughter of demented Euro-sceptic MP Bill Cash, are close chums and the two gels decided to throw a lavish, post-election "cheer-up" bash to be held at the Mayfair home rented by Sir Jammy.*

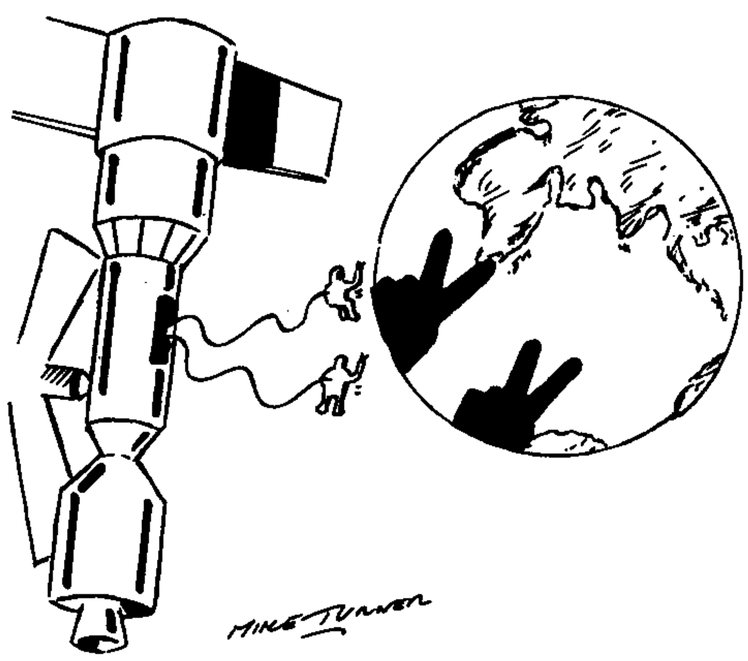
Rich Tory Bill Cash, anxious not to be shown up by zillionaire Goldfinger, stumped up half the cost. Jemima and Laetitia, a student "fashion journalist", spent hours agonizing over the guest list and ordering vast supplies of incredibly expensive refreshments. The party was a huge success among the "Trustfund babe" set — except that, er, Jemima simply didn't turn up. Was she just too depressed to be cheered up?

HALLO! ALAN CLARK threw quite the best party of the month and we all forgot about the election completely! I even noticed dear Lord Archer talking animatedly to sassy "new" Labour groupie Kathy Lette! The Australian was enthusing in typical fashion about the quality of men's bottoms in South Africa. Jeffrey was having none of this and patriotically pointed to his own posterior. "Best British Buttock!" he shouted. What larks!

HALLO! *LADY Carla Powell continues to be a marvellous ambassadress for "new" Labour. She recently rushed up to wicked old Tory Andrew Neill at a party and told him that she had just bought another house. "It was so cheap darling," she enthused, "Two hundred and ninety thousand! It's just petrol money!" Asked how many houses she now owns, the delightful Carla replied: "Three, four, five, six... I can't remember!"*

New Labour, New House!

'The Marquess'



Spacemen Behaving Badly

AS WE reported in the last *Eye*, Lord Donoughue has been given a ministerial post in the new government even though Tony Blair was warned before the election of his lordship's association with the Maxwell pension funds. "Can anyone explain why?" we asked.

A helpful Labour grandee has now pointed out that in 1973 Donoughue co-authored the official hagiography of Lord Morrison of Lambeth, *Portrait of a Politician*. The book was written with the cooperation of Morrison's only daughter, Mary — who just happens to be the mother of Peter Mandelson.

NEWLY-elected Labour MPs are quickly learning of the perks that go with their new jobs.

Jane Griffiths, the new Labour MP for Reading East, is a former Reading borough councillor and chair of the town's arts and leisure committee. She has acted swiftly to appoint a researcher from her £48,000-a-year office allowance: one Andrew Tattersall.

Mr Tattersall, a fellow Reading councillor, is qualified for the job having been a researcher for both Berkshire county council and Berkshire health commission. Conveniently, he also happens to be the live-in partner of, er, Jane Griffiths.

Ms Griffiths stresses that the arrangement will be on a totally business-like footing.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"England should not stage the 2006 world cup. A South African claim would be superior to that of any European country staging the competition."

— Parliamentary motion proposed by Tony Banks, Labour backbencher, January 1997.

"The one thing we need to show is that the government is entirely behind the FA in its bid."

— Tony Banks, minister for sport, speaking to the Press Association, May 1997.

DEFEATED health minister Gerry Malone should perhaps reconsider seeking the help of m'learned friends in overturning the general election result in Winchester.

The records show that Mark Oaten, after various recounts, won the seat for the Liberal Democrats by two votes, but Malone claims that in an earlier recount he came ahead by 73. Malone, though, has conveniently forgotten to mention the effect on the vote of one of the defeated candidates, Richard Huggett.

Huggett, best known as the man who stood against the Liberal Democrats in Devon as a *Literal* Democrat in the 1994 Euro elections, only for the Tories to win by a slender margin, stood in Winchester under the bizarre banner of "Liberal Democrat Top Choice For Parliament", having been prevented by the returning officer from standing as Gerry *MaClone* even though he had changed his name by deed poll.

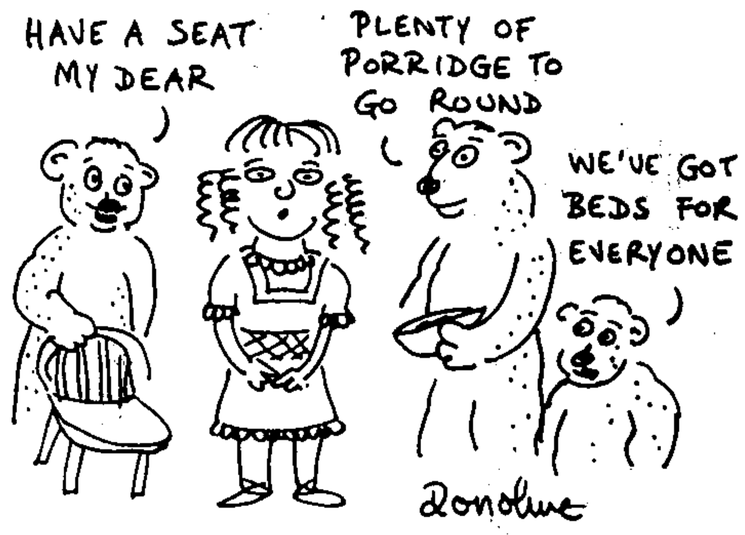
During the count, when it looked as if the Tories had won by 23 votes, Oaten approached him and exclaimed: "You bastard, Huggett, I'm going to fucking kill you." Ironically, Huggett could now be crucial to Oaten's case... if he argues successfully that the 640 votes for Liberal Democrat Top Choice For Parliament were meant for him.

"OLD" Labour is alive and well in south Wales and eager to jump aboard the "new" Labour gravy train. Unfortunately it is not clear how many lucrative quangos will remain after the formation of a Welsh assembly.

It seems the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) will survive despite its disastrous record (see *Eyes passim*). But who is going to control the even more disastrous Cardiff Bay development corporation? This is a key question for Wales. The only sign of "new" Labour's attitude to it so far is its failure to appoint Rhodri Morgan, long-standing deputy to the shadow Welsh secretary and massive opponent of the development. He has been given no government position at all.

Without him the plans to destroy a site of special scientific look about to plough ahead with Labour's blessing. For if the Cardiff Bay corporation does remain free of any new Welsh assembly's control, the new government will not have any hand in its affairs at all.

Only "old" Labour is represented on its board — six Labour members ranging from Lord Brookes of Tremorfa, election agent for Jim Callaghan, to Coun Russell Goodway, leader of Cardiff council — and are paid handsomely for their onerous duties. They will be under no pressure to reveal what is going on in the corporation to their new Labour bosses because they have all signed an agreement that the corporation's dealings should be kept confidential. Unless the Cardiff Bay corporation is brought under democratic control it will carry on with its destructive plans unhindered.



GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BLAIRS

JAMES PURNELL brings plenty of political baggage to his new job in the Number Ten policy unit.

A former Islington councillor, Purnell was instrumental in seeing lefty Liz Davies deselected as Labour candidate in Leeds North East — thanks to a memo he and serving Islington councillors Phil Kelly and Tal Michael (son of MP Alun) passed to the Labour party's NEC.

The memo concerned allegations about Davies' supposed rabble-rousing actions at a meeting of Islington's education committee when the closure of a playgroup was on the agenda. Davies served a writ over the accusation and eventually won an apology in the high court in September 1996. She had the pleasure of seeing all three cough up £300 a piece to the general election fighting fund of Jeremy Corbyn, lefty MP for Islington North.

CAMPAIGNING Labour MP Chris Mullin is sticking up for his local Sunderland fishermen who are trying to stop a company monopolising their fish market.

The company, Wearfish, funded by local and Euro-grants, is being criticised by Mullin because once it has taken over the quayside it will be the only company to which the trawlermen can sell their fish.

Another fishy fact about Wearfish is that the European Union's regional development grant of half a million pounds was given to the company on the condition that it was non-profit making. Wearfish has now advertised for a manager on a salary of £20,000-a-year... plus profit share.

Before Mullin sticks up for the fishermen and attacks the company perhaps he should consult his constituency agent, Kevin Marquis. As a prominent member of the Wearfish consortium Marquis should be able to give Mullin all the information he needs.

'Backbiter'

THE NEW GIRLS: 1
Lorna Fitzsimons

NEW GIRL Lorna Fitzsimons, 30, who ended the Liberal Democrat Liz Lynne's grip on Rochdale, is an ambitious Blairite who is destined to get up the noses of "old" Labour grousers in the Strangers' Bar within a matter of weeks.

Unkind honourable friends have already christened her Rochdale's Mrs Merton, while others have detected an extraordinary similarity to the late and unlamented Madame Mao. Such a comparison may be a trifle unfair; but fellow student politicians from her days as president of the National Union of Students still shiver at the memory of her hectoring tirades from numerous conference platforms, as the massed ranks of smelly-socked students were forcibly weaned from their predilection for noisy demos demanding more grants.

Bossy Fitzsimons also enjoyed unparalleled unpopularity at the union's Islington headquarters, not helped by her tendency to send staff out on little errands like the collection of her dry cleaning. It was to the field of professional lobbying that she then turned her formidable skills, eschewing the usual worthy causes-type post traditionally taken by her predecessors.

She joined Rowland Sallingbury Casey, a lobbying firm run by Stratford-upon-Avon's new Conservative MP John Maples. For a while it all went swimmingly, with *PR Week* magazine awarding her the "Young Communicator of the Year" award. She also became the youngest participant on the BBC's *Question Time*. But she was soon to come to the attention of the ever vigilant MP Dale Campbell Savours, who exploded when he discovered that she had informed the same magazine that: "The value to Rowland's clients is that they've got one more person in the House who really understands them."

"She thinks that she will be an asset to her clients," said *PR Week*, before an unusually reticent Fitzsimons was to claim that she had been completely misrepresented. Little wonder she was embarrassed when "Rowland's" clients included the Water Companies Association and Amersham International, one of the first companies privatised by Thatcher.

Something of a personality, Fitzsimons ended up in a ferocious spat with Rochdale's sitting Liberal Democrat MP, Liz Lynne. Local Lib Dems were furious after reading a pre-election address movingly entitled "Lorna Fitzsimons on Health", for in it she claimed that the National Health Service had saved the life of her mother "in the year of its birth in 1948" after she had received successful open heart surgery.

Without the life-saving operation, Lorna, her brother, sister and mother "would not be here today". There were red faces all round after a letter by one Alan Fearn appeared in the local rag, delicately pointing out that if such an operation had taken place "it must have been magic, because open heart surgery was not available for another twenty years".

Still, the reward for Fitzsimons' loyalty to Tony Blair is that her Millbank controllers have allowed her out into the television studios. An early appearance, which is set to become something of a collector's item, took place recently during a recent edition of *Newsnight* where she curtly informed Jeremy Paxman that she intended "to be around for another 25 years", earning her the curt aside "You're ambitious". This was a distinct change of tone from an early interview with Matthew d'Ancona of the *Times* in her days as NUS president when she told him: "I'd rather be a venture capitalist with a jet set lifestyle than a Labour MP."

In the early struggle for supremacy among "new" Labour wimmin, Fitzsimons is coming out on top. She was the first to wheedle an oleaginous question to Blair in the new-style prime minister's time, while also securing an invite to dine at the CBI's trough last week, while other Labour MPs eager to catch the new chancellor's eye missed out altogether.

Thoroughly "new" Labour Lorna will undoubtedly be around for a long time, while her defeated Liberal Democrat opponent can count on a huge pile of commiseration cards — from old-style Labour MPs.

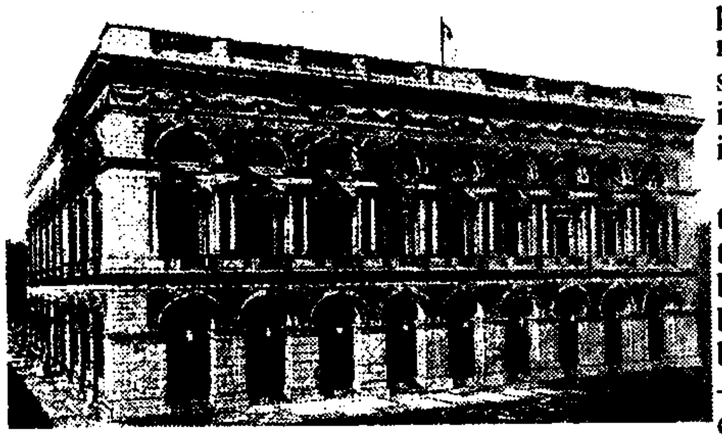
'Cassius'

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE Free Trade Hall in Peter Street, Manchester, built in 1853-56, is the masterpiece of Edward Walters, the architect who did so much to embellish the great Victorian city.

Its rich and grand sculptural facade develops themes taken from the Renaissance of Italy. Cecil Stewart, in his book *The Stones of Manchester*, considered it the city's "finest public building. It represents the high water mark of the palazzo style." Not so Richard Leese, leader of Manchester city council.

Mr Leese pronounces that it is "an awful building of no historic interest other than being the site of the Peterloo Massacre". Well, given that Peterloo in 1819 was one of the defining events of radical politics in Britain, that would surely be quite enough; but the very name of the Free Trade Hall also proclaims Manchester's political contribution to British parliamentary democracy, and Edward Walters had been brought to the city by Richard Cobden himself, the radical MP and one of the leaders of the fight against the corn laws.



In 1858 Charles Halle conducted the Gentleman's Concert Orchestra in the hall, the first of a series of concerts for which the city has been famous until the present. In 1862 the hall was used for a mass meeting of cotton workers to pledge their support for the fight against slavery in the American civil war, despite the economic hardship created by the North's blockade of the Confederate South — what President Lincoln called "an act of sublime Christian heroism".

Besides which the Free Trade Hall is also a magnificent piece of architecture. Gutted in the second world war, it was immediately rebuilt with a new hall as Manchester's contribution to the Festival of Britain. The then lord mayor said at the time: "May its rich and worthy traditions be for ever upheld and the name of Manchester Free Trade Hall be for all time associated with the peaceful advancement of life's most noble projects." Need I go on, Mr Leese?

The trouble is that since the opening of the new Bridgewater Hall nearby, the Free Trade Hall is surplus to requirements. So what do the modern city fathers propose to do with it? Well, flog it to an hotel consortium which graciously proposes to keep the facade but replace everything behind by a 22-storey, 300-bed tower which would look well in, say, Benidorm. The developers, La Sande and Taylor Woodrow, have now submitted a planning application for this "exciting modern building" which, naturally, has the full support of Mr Leese's council.

But it does not have the full support of the Royal Fine Art Commission, which considers it impossible for the Free Trade Hall to retain any dignity and integrity with an hotel tower behind and on top and that, besides, hotel use is inappropriate for a building of such historical importance. And, nothing if not helpful, the commission suggests that the building should be converted into a conference centre.

Yes, indeed: Manchester wants a new international conference centre, but stupidly proposes to bury the thing underground behind the G-Mex Centre — that most successful conversion of the old Manchester Central Station train shed. So why not do something similarly sensible with the Free Trade Hall itself?

The city plans for the listed building are being vigorously opposed by the Manchester Civic Society, the Friends of the Free Trade Hall and the Victorian Society, but the fate of "Manchester's finest public building" now lies in the hands of the department of the environment and our new national political masters. Will "new" Labour show that it actually cares about architecture and urban civilisation? Or will it just defer to its good "old" Labour pals who run most of Britain's cities and let them return to the good old days of Harold Wilson and T.Dan Smith? We shall see.

'Piloti'

NUKES AND CRONIES

A NEW round of nuclear warfare is starting as the Environment Agency seeks opinions on whether British Nuclear Fuels (BNF) should be allowed to increase radioactive discharges from THORP, its thermal oxide reprocessing plant in Sellafield.

Most reassuringly, the government agency's own key advisers are in complete, er, disagreement.

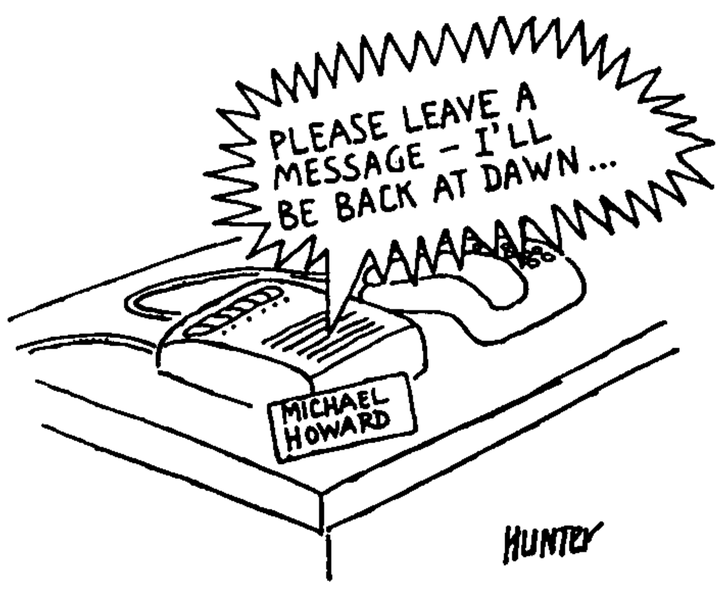
Just as everyone concerned with nuclear power hoped that Labour's accident-prone John Cunningham was safely out of the way as minister of agriculture, his department has plonked itself firmly at the centre of the controversy. It went on record (admittedly before Cunningham became minister) with a submission to the agency opposing any increase in the aerial discharge of poisonous gas because it will contaminate farmland. Cunningham is MP for Copeland, and his most important constituent, BNF, is applying to do just that.

Against the agriculture ministry, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (NII) has also put forward its submission. It is *not* opposed to venting gas all over the countryside because it will reduce the amount that has to be held in store inside the plutonium factory, where it puts the workforce at risk. The NII is responsible for the safety of workers.

This leaves the Environment Agency playing piggy in the middle, and wondering since last November how it can possibly launch a "public consultation" exercise when the government side is so badly split. The consultation is required by law after the Greenpeace case three years ago when a judge ruled that any release of radioactivity must be "justified" to show the net benefit outweighed the net detriment.

The final decision will greatly affect the future of the £2.3bn reprocessing plant, which would be difficult to operate if BNF loses. Understandably, the agency is taking a long, long time to launch the "consultation".

The government is under heavy pressure from the nuclear lobby, which has launched a powerful assault to see if the new lot are a softer touch than the *ancien regime*. BNF has recruited Peter Metcalfe, who was researcher to John Battle, now the energy minister. And Charles Falconer, a barrister who was counsel for BNF against Greenpeace and the parents of child victims of leukaemia, is now solicitor-general with a peerage awarded by his old friend Tony Blair. It is the first time a solicitor-general has been cocooned from politics in the House of Lords.



WATERWORLD

AFTER months of moaning about droughts and windfall taxes, the water companies have announced massive profits of £2bn. But how much, if any, of this booty will end up fixing the miles of leading pipes, rather than in the pockets of gleeful shareholders and company chairmen?

If "new" Labour really is going to call the greedy privatised water companies to account, they must be forced to mend these leaky pipes. It is an expensive investment for the reluctant firms, and it offers no instant return.

Last year's ruse to prevent them having to fix the leaks was to insist that most come from pipes on customers' property and so are the customer's responsibility. In fact, they claimed, this type of leakage had increased by 5 per cent in one year. Ofwat responded by telling the companies to help their customers find and repair the leaks.

Another even more cunning ploy is to manipulate the figures for unmeasured household consumption. By inflating their estimates for how much water is used by unmetered properties they can reduce their estimates for how much is leaked from pipes on the way to those properties.

Ofwat reported that "in aggregate companies reported significant increases in estimates of unmeasured household consumption from 146 litres per head per day in 1994-5 to 154 litres per head per day in 1995-96, an increase of over 5 per cent".

This huge leap could be due to the drought of last year, but interestingly the companies with well-established consumption monitors only reported a modest growth in consumption. Anglian Water, for example, which is praised for its accurate measurement of consumption, showed virtually no increase in per capita consumption.

But it is the southern water companies like Mid Southern, Sutton and East Surrey and South East where water consumption was strangely high. Ofwat reports: "It is difficult to understand some of the larger increases in company estimates of unmeasured household per capita consumption or drought related use."

Meanwhile, facing another arid summer has made some of the companies come up with batty ideas to cut demand. Mid Kent Water intends to meter water supplies used for swimming pools or for sprinklers attached to the end of garden hoses, but not garden hoses themselves. Rather than spending money on improved drainage and mains repairs, it is hiring fleet helicopters to fly over its territory at a cost of thousands of pounds a year to try to spot the unmetered sprinkler or swimming pool.

Mid Kent's leakage rate is second worst (after Thames Water) at 26 per cent. Never mind. The company is still making a fortune through its aggressive disconnection and reconnection policy. Reconnections must be paid for and those who have been cut off are usually those who can least afford to pay for reconnection. This means it is often the benefits agency which ends up paying the water company's charges — a useful public subsidy.

Ofwat criticised the company for its disconnection policy earlier this month. Graham Westbrook, Mid Kent's customer services manager, responded: "We believe that those who pay for their water should not subsidise those who do not" — unless it's the taxpayer, of course.

Watchdog Health Check (BBC1)

Health Alert (Channel 4)

COVERAGE of health issues has been the journalistic growth industry of the last few years. This isn't surprising. At a time of fierce commercial competition, "human interest" journalism — light, accessible, compelling — will always flourish.

No subject is of more interest to humans than the risk of them dropping dead at any moment. Even more excitingly, body copy — unlike other genres of media fluff — can easily be dressed up to resemble investigative or campaigning journalism.

There are other editorial benefits. Ever since *Health And Efficiency* magazine, the H-word has been a useful euphemism for tits and other bits: medicine-as-sex. And discussion of physical well-being is also a perfect excuse for two of the favourite techniques of popular journalism, exaggeration and grotesquerie: sky-is-falling pieces and bearded-lady stuff.

A faithful follower of the newspaper agenda, television has predictably seen an equivalent growth in health programmes. **Health Check** — running on Thursdays at 7pm on BBC1 — is a spin-off from the consumer series *Watchdog*, although its mature main presenter, Anne Robinson, is replaced here by her glamorous young sidekick, Alice Beer. The bitchy joke at Television Centre is that *Health Check* will soon feature advice to middle-aged women on how to cope with the psychological shock of rejection for a younger model.

Perfectly copying the middle-market press agenda on health, last week's show began with medicine-as-sex. A furrowed-brow report on the relative usefulness of different sun creams in protecting against skin cancer was really an excuse to show lots of sub-*Baywatch* footage of bronzed bodies on beaches.

This was swiftly followed by a sky-is-falling report: Angela Rippon — whose appearance offered the medical show an appropriate example of life after career death — fretted over doubts raised about the safety of a piece of equipment used in premature baby units. Emotive and slickly exploitative of the fears of parents, this was health journalism at its worst: a rare error or accident magnified by hysterical reportage to create unnecessary alarm.

Finally there was the bearded-lady piece: the freak show segment. Three of the fattest men in Britain were invited by the series to attempt a diet. The favoured daily menu of these real-life teletubbies was awe-strickenly explained: deep-fried Mars Bars, creme eggs in batter. The men took a bow in the studio. This was the measurements page in *The Guinness Book of World Records* passed off as nutritional advice. It was also self-defeating. Watching slobs would have thought: at least I'm not as fat as those fat bastards.

Channel 4's **Health Alert** — offering viewers a second opinion on the genre, half an hour later on Thursdays — was also dicing with the freak-show genre. The whole 30 minutes was devoted to sufferers from chronic acne. But whatever the premise, the televisual treatment was — apart from the title "Pizza Face" and the sarky use of Lloyd Cole's "Perfect Skin" on the soundtrack — impressively non-tabloid. Fly-on-the-surgery-wall footage was interspersed with straightforward interviews with the sufferers.

It's not entirely fair to compare a show made for a minority channel with one created for a mainstream network but — given recent allegations of a downmarket plunge at Channel 4 — it's only fair to point out that *Health Alert*'s acne analysis knocked spots off the BBC's *Health Check*. The latter demonstrates that, neatly enough, health journalism — with its ability to accommodate a variety of journalistic sins — gives the media a sick-note: an excuse for not working as hard as they usually would.

'Square Eyes'

COUCH POTATO WRITES:

AFTER the *Eye*'s recent review of *Teletubbies* — dutifully read and regurgitated by every newspaper in the land — a reader has kindly supplied the BBC's official response to any viewer bold enough to complain about this blatantly drug-induced series for tiny tots.

According to Judy Whitfield, executive producer young children's programmes: "*Teletubbies* is specifically designed to encourage very young children to interact with the screen. *Teletubbies* does not take the easier option of doing children's thinking for them but leaves space for them to make their own meanings." For our correspondent's further information, Ms Whitfield also enclosed a couple of internal BBC documents explaining the series' intentions more clearly, or at least, using more words.

"*Teletubbies* will establish programme rhythms, leading children from beginnings, through middles to ends in a gentle flow throughout... *Teletubbies* will encourage children to make predictions, to become conscious of temporal sequencing, to develop concept and spatial awareness... For children for whom television and video are part of an environment already rich in opportunities for self-exploration, physical well-being, social competence and emotional maturity, *Teletubbies* will be an additional stimulus. For children in an impoverished home environment, *Teletubbies* will be available, accessible, engaging, stimulating, enriching and empowering at a time and at an age when they are most receptive."

The Voice Trumpets, we learn, "are mechanical speakers that can bring any kind of short utterances from outside Teletubbyland", while the Narrator "is the voice of the author (the mind behind the windmill)". Parents of small children will no doubt be reassured to learn that 80 hours of this cack have already been commissioned and produced by the BBC.

RADIO WAVES

JAMES BOYLE, the new controller of Radio 4, used to be known as "McBirt" in his previous job at Radio Scotland, and his record since arriving at Broadcasting House has shown why.

Like his mentor he seems to regard the BBC as an adventure playground for management systems rather than a company which makes and broadcasts programmes. His first big achievement has been to reorganise Radio 4 into five "day-parts" — morning, afternoon, evening, Saturday, Sunday — each with its own commissioning editor. To complicate matters, however, he is also dividing the output "generically". Thus an Afternoon Play must be commissioned by a drama editor but also by the afternoon editor.

It took him only six months — and advice from countless expensive "consultants" — to dream up this wheeze. But no programme can actually be commissioned for the next financial year until Boyle unveils his new "editorial policy".

The next year begins on 5 April 1998, so you might think there is still plenty of time. But as a senior executive pointed out to him recently, major productions — such as a six-part drama series — usually need to be started 12 months before transmission: the script has to be commissioned and written, a cast has to be recruited (good actors often have to be booked well in advance) etc, etc.

Boyle's answer was simple: he was willing to fill the schedule with nothing but repeats for a month or two after 5 April. "If that's what it takes," he told startled colleagues, "that's what it takes."

ALL OVER THE HILL AND FAR AWAY, TELETUBBIES COME OUT TO PLAY...
PRANCING ABOUT IN THEIR OWN LITTLE WORLDS, SPEAKING A LANGUAGE KNOWN ONLY TO THEMSELVES...
Teletubbies
Tinky Wyatty
Birtlaa Laa
Phillisy
Yenpo
BEING A BAD INFLUENCE ON ANY WATCHING TOT, BY LETTING TV STANDARDS GO TO POT...
LEAVING POOR LITTLE LICENCE PAYERS REDUCED TO SOBS...
AND WONDERING HOW THEY KEEP THEIR JOBS?
KenRyne

Adrian White and Biwater Limited

ON 3 November 1995 we published an article about Adrian White, at the time a recently appointed governor of the BBC, and his water engineering and contracting company, Biwater Limited.

Adrian White and Biwater Limited issued proceedings for libel against *Private Eye* in respect of this article, which suggested that Biwater Limited owed its position as a recipient of government aid under the Aid and Trade Provision to reasons other than its merits as a company.

Those proceedings have now been resolved and, in a statement read out to the high court on 13 May, *Private Eye*, through its solicitor, accepted that the allegations it had made were wholly false and offered its sincere apologies to Adrian White and Biwater Limited. The court was also told that it had agreed to pay them a substantial sum in damages and their legal costs.

MEDIA NEWS

TWO cheers for the BBC for putting Alan Yentob back in charge of television. At least Botney knows how to make a programme and remembers what the point of public service broadcasting is.

His return to favour is also welcome as a humiliation for John Birt, since it proves his previous "restructuring" was a pointless farce.

No cheers, however, for the decision to appoint David "Demographics" Doherty as Botney's deputy. Birtist Doherty's soulless numerical approach to programming is legendary and has made him immensely unpopular. Asked what he thought of a recent *Panorama*, he replied: "It was down point two in its time slot."

When accused by colleagues of having no programme making experience, he gets furious. He exploded at one: "That's not true. I was once on attachment to *On the Record*."

WHAT do BBC managers do when their spending on absurd "interpersonal skills" courses is slated in the press? Why, send their staff away on another one as soon as possible, of course.

Now it is the turn of duty editors at Caversham-based BBC Monitoring to attend all-important one-day courses on "how to deal with staff attitude problems". In other words they will be taught to deal with the kind of troublemakers who told the press about the recent £50,000 jaunt to Edinburgh for sessions which teach staff to "envision" and "connect".

HOW did Labour's Stuart Bell put the squeeze on Bruce Gyngell, head of Yorkshire-Tyne Tees Television, to try to scrap *The Death of Childhood* documentary about the Cleveland child abuse scandal?

Bell, Labour MP for Middlesbrough, wrote the book *When Salem Came to the Borough* which concluded that innocent local families had been the victims of a witchhunt. When he heard that Yorkshire-Tyne Tees was making one of three programmes reexamining the cases he immediately dashed off a letter to Gyngell.

In it he pointed out that Tyne Tees had won awards for its news coverage of the scandal. Moreover, he said, "as a consequence it might put the station into a somewhat embarrassing situation if there was a programme to be introduced by Yorkshire setting it at odds with one of its own stations." Bell was unhappy about two different points of view being aired on the same vexed issue: whether or not children had suffered abuse.

Bell has been reluctant to concede two points of view over Cleveland before. One of the central cases in his book was about a six-year-old girl whose family split up following allegations that she had been abused. Bell, after interviewing the father, claimed she had never suffered from anything more than a skin disorder. The child's mother, whom Bell had never seen or spoken to, later said she believed her child *had* been abused.

Mr Bell was unrepentant and clearly remains so. In the event his intervention achieved nothing and the programme went out on 27 May.

HACKWATCH

NIGEL DEMPSTER

EARLIER this year *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre tried to put the wind up Nigel Pratt-Dumpster by hiring his old sparring-partner Peter McLie to write a rival diary in the paper under the pseudonym "Ephraim Hardcastle".

McLie's mischievous jottings have proved rather popular with readers — but has the wretched Dumpster been shamed into livening up his own dreary Diary? Judge for yourselves...

1 April: Glad tidings from Robert Sangster's son Ben — his wife has given birth to a baby boy. "He was a little premature, but everything is fine," the proud father reassures Dempster.

3 April: Stephan Connery, son of Sean, has landed a job with Sotheby's in New York. "I'm looking forward to going out there," Stephan discloses. "It'll be a very exciting time."

6 April: Sculptress Katy Braine has given birth to her first child. "Both Katy and the baby are doing fine," Dempster is informed. "No doubt about it, she's a lucky girl."

7 April: Dempster leads his column with news of "an amusing mix-up". Lord Daresbury has, it seems, "been plagued by correspondence and calls destined for a pub of the same name in the environs, and vice versa". Once the laughter has subsided, we turn to more serious matters: Beatriz Flecha de Lima Nasr, daughter of the former Brazilian ambassador to Washington, has given birth to a girl. "It's an amazing feeling to become a mother," observes Beatriz, 28.

11 April: Joel Cadbury, 25, who "is fast becoming one of London's most successful club owners and restaurateurs", launches his fourth restaurant tonight — which Dempster obligingly puffs. "I'm very excited about it," Joel confesses.

15 April: Tory MP Matthew Banks will shortly be taking a break from his reelection campaign — when his wife goes into labour. "The word labour means two very different things to me at the moment," quips Sandhurst-trained Matthew, 35. "Jane is expecting twins any day now and we're thrilled."

17 April: Lady Apsley, 31, is to appear on the catwalk today at a charity fashion show on her husband's 14,000-acre Cirencester estate. "It's my first time as a model and it's going to be absolutely hysterical," Lady A predicts.

22 April: There's a new woman on the arm of "man-about-town" Charles Finch, 34. She is Emma Woollard, 28, who "made her name in the Eighties as the girl in the Impulse TV advert".

23 April: Dr Miriam Stoppard is escorted by her elder son, music promoter William, 25, to the launch of Alberta Ferretti's shop in Sloane Street. "I love clothes," she explains.

28 April: Actress Sophia Wylie will make her West End stage debut next week in the play *Master Class*. "It's a wonderful opportunity for me," sighs Sophia, 29.

30 April: There is a new woman in the life of dashing dentist Sam White: she is blonde PR girl Karen Brooks, 34. "Karen is exactly what the doctor ordered as far as Sam is concerned," says a friend. Architect's son Sam, 35, runs his Bright White dental practice in Battersea Square, south London.

2 May: Reporting from America, Dempster scoops the world with the news that Lucas White, son of the late financier Lord White of Hull, has attended an auction in New York with his fiancée Normandie Keith. Lucas and Normandie spend most of their time in Bermuda — but this week, Dempster can reveal, "they have been at their Manhattan apartment.

4 May: Sadly, the temporary parting of Dorothy Tutin's actor son Nick Waring, 29, and girlfriend Beth Goddard has become permanent. "Nick and Beth weren't getting along and so they decided the sensible thing to do was to split up," a friend explains helpfully.

7 May: "While her husband Leigh Lawson is in Australia performing a series of classical parts, actress Twiggy has lost her heart to another rover." But fear not. Twiggy, who this summer can be seen in Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* at the Chichester Festival Theatre, has fallen in love with... a labrador called Samson! The former supermodel met Samson when she opened new facilities at the Mount Noddy Animal Sanctuary, near Chichester.

8 May: The Earl of Gainsborough's younger son, stockbroker Edward Noel, 36, has announced his engagement to Sarah Yeats-Brown, 35, who runs her own hat and fake fur business. "Sarah — whose mother Ann is a cousin of former Prime Minister Anthony Eden — will be given away by her brother Richard," Dempster reveals excitedly.

9 May: Back after seven months' filming in Mexico, actress Kate Winslet, 21, is relaxing by picking colour schemes for her new London home. "I've bought a big flat in a Georgian house," she confides. "Thankfully there are no jobs lined up, which suits me because I need a break — and anyway I'm too busy picking out the colours, which is very exciting."

11 May: Grace Browning, grand-daughter of Daphne du Maurier, has finally got her foot in the door of film production by joining a small British company, Mission Films. "They're a fab company. It's a great, young, happening place to work and I'm very happy here," says a delighted Grace, 22.

12 May: BBC TV's *Newsround* presenter Julie Etchingham will marry her *fiancé* Nick Gardener in July. "This is one item *Newsround* won't be covering," laughs Julie, 27.

16 May: Venetia Lang, daughter of former trade secretary Ian Lang, is "on tenterhooks", hoping for her big break into showbusiness. "I enjoyed performing in a charity production of *Lady Windermere's Fan* last month — even if I did only have one line to say. It was excellent experience, though, and I should really try to capitalise on it," muses Venetia, 25, who is temping as a secretary until her moment of glory comes.

20 May: It has been a hectic Cannes festival for Adnan Khashoggi and his third wife, Iranian beauty Shahpari: their son Kamal cut his forehead slightly. "He was chasing a lizard and fell over. Luckily no harm was done," say his relieved parents.

21 May: While visiting his uncle Bernard in Marbella this month, polo-playing Lucas White, 22, and fiancée Normandie Keith have adopted a 15-month-old dog which they've christened Flea, and plan to take her back to their home in Bermuda. "Flea is just the most wonderful dog ever," reveals the beauteous Normandie, 25.

22 May: Champion trainer Richard Hannon's daughter Lizzie has announced her engagement to Irish jockey Richard Hughes. "Mum and Dad are really pleased," says Lizzie, 21.

23 May: Construction heir Hamish McAlpine has returned from Beverly Hills to organise his August wedding to fiancée Karen Nicholls, 22. "I'm looking forward to it all," Hamish admits.

It is about 20 years since Lord Rothermere complained that Dempster's Diary had all the appeal of "an old, cold, fried potato". Now that Rothermere is backing the Blairites, the *Mail* may well decide that it is "time for a change": New Labour, new potatoes. Has Dumpster finally had his chips?

"More fanny than it used to be..."

DOING THE ROUNDS

Durham Casebook

GLEN DIMMICK, 16, was late for his football practice so he took a short cut through some fields. There seemed to be a gap in a fence, which he decided to jump through. He did not notice a single strand of wire across the gap and jumped straight into it.

The wire threw him back but he got up and started his football. He soon felt sick and went home. Ten days later he was dead. He died because he had been "reduced to an extreme state of debility due to dehydration and weight loss brought about by persistent vomiting". The cause of the vomiting was a routine internal injury caused by the wire.

Glenn went to **Dryburn Hospital** in **Durham** three times. He spent six days as an in-patient in ward seven. He never stopped vomiting. His illness was diagnosed as psychological and he was sent home the day before he died. An inquest jury last November held that Glenn had died from an accident "aggravated by lack of care".

A hospital inquiry composed of executives from the **North Durham Acute Hospital Trust** and two outside assessors concluded last month that the hospital "failed to deliver an acceptable standard of care to Glenn Dimmick and his family". The long report revealed that "Glenn was admitted with a classic young male person's injury... from which he would normally be expected to make a complete recovery."

He had suffered a haematoma, or small bruise, which had shut off the path from his stomach to his bowel, forcing him to vomit up everything he ate or drank. This could have been easily detected by a whole-body scan which was never undertaken. The fluid charts which would have revealed the fluid and electrolyte imbalance which was the real cause of his deterioration and death were not available to the inquiry or the inquest.

The consultant surgeon, David Herring, told the inquest that "hourly aspirates [sicking up] of 100ml are not significant". The inquiry report stated: "During the course of our inquiry Mr Herring clearly stated to us that this was obviously not true and that aspirates of such a volume are of great significance." Why then had Mr Herring told the inquest that they were not significant? The report concluded: "He can only assume that if he made this statement it was an inadvertent error made under the stress of questioning."

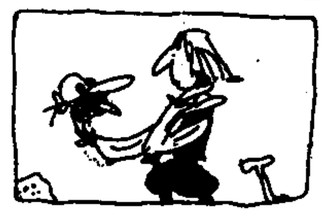
Another problem not solved by the inquiry was the attitude of the ward sister Janet Atkinson. She told the inquest she noticed that Glenn had spent long periods in the bath — a habit she said which in her experience suggested addiction to drugs or alcohol. This view was abruptly rejected by the inquiry. The report also found that "the surgeon and the ward sister drifted towards a psychological explanation" for Glenn's illness for which there were "no grounds".

Moreover, Glenn should not have been discharged from the hospital on the day before he died. "The decision to discharge him," says the report, "was taken quickly and surprised some of the staff. Proper discharge procedures were not followed and this meant that Glenn, his mother and their GP were not given adequate information about his condition or on how to look after him at home."

Despite this catalogue of fatal error; despite the obvious and shocking lack of elementary care, despite the most unctuous regrets and apologies, the trust board concluded "that it would be inappropriate to initiate disciplinary proceedings". Marie Mills, Glenn's mother, said she was shocked and disgusted at this decision. "My son died, but the people who let him die go on looking after others," she told the *Eye*.

Two weeks after issuing their press release announcing no disciplinary action, the trust board got a letter from a woman who had worked on the usual short-term contract in ward seven of Dryburn Hospital from which Glenn Dimmick was discharged the day before he died. The letter made a formal complaint against Janet Atkinson and alleged that when Glenn was first admitted to the ward Sister Atkinson "mistakenly thought he was a thug and a drug addict" and dealt with him accordingly. This letter has been passed to the coroner who is considering what further action to take. A trust board spokeswoman confirmed a formal complaint had been made and told the *Eye*: "The trust is taking steps to deal with this and cannot comment further at this stage."

LUVVIES



"I do dread the idea of just churning out plays. It's not that I've gone off acting because when this came up I was thrilled. I guess there's lots of us looking to go into territory where you've not been before. It's really good to be terrified."

JULIET STEVENSON
Time Out

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Great North Eastern Railway

GNER is trying to persuade the franchising director to extend from seven years to 15 its running of the King's Cross to Edinburgh franchise — but many people must hope its overtures are rejected.

GNER has Britain's most modern mainline and a fleet of 140mph-electric trains at its disposal, yet to taxpayers' chagrin it still takes millions in subsidy (£64.6m in its first year) to run a service BR ran at a profit. Not that GNER will be *un*profitable: a former director of transport studies at Coopers & Lybrand estimates it will make £289.1m over seven years.

Other train operators must also have their fingers crossed: GNER has nothing but contempt for the concept of a coordinated network. It runs a bus from Lincoln to connect into its trains which undermine another train operator's connecting rail service — as will another GNER bus connection which starts soon from Hull, Grimsby and Scunthorpe. The company wants Welwyn North station, not served by GNER, to be closed outright (see *Eye* 920) and is planning a new out-of-town station near Doncaster which could threaten InterCity services from the central station.

GNER has also abandoned an agreement to use ScotRail drivers north of the border at the same time as cutting its own drivers. One wrote to the *Eye* claiming that drivers at Newcastle depot worked more than 300 rest days between September and January and one colleague commutes 100 miles each way by car every day after his job was suddenly switched to Edinburgh. The drivers may vote to ban rest-day working.

Morale is not helped by the Victorian approach of bosses. A recent memo to station managers said: "Hats are to be worn at all times unless excessive temperatures prevail. In this case, staff should be given the opportunity to retire for short periods where they can take their hats off and allow their heads to cool off."

Passengers have no reason to be any happier. Latest figures from the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising show GNER was the only company (of the 13 privatised when figures were collected) failing to meet passenger's charter punctuality standards. Up to February only 60.5 percent of its trains arrived on time. As a staff briefing leaked to the *Eye* states: "Rising trend for staff to report verbal abuse from customers."

And within days of transport minister Gavin Strang warning private operators to improve their act, GNER left passengers waiting for hours at King's Cross as successive trains to Doncaster were cancelled. Doubtless they were delighted to stand and watch as a VIP train left on time on the same route — a junket celebrating the anniversary of the privatisation of the East Coast mainline.

● MORE from Lancaster where the blank platform monitors will not be repaired until an independent report works out whose responsibility they are (*Eye* 924). One reader suffered the monitors in silence but found out his train to Scotland was heavily delayed anyway. Railtrack employees announced that this was due to a defective (Virgin) locomotive. When the train did arrive, the (Virgin) guard apologised "for the late running of this service. This has been caused by defective (Railtrack) signalling."

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE FARM

DESPITE the fall in beef consumption as a result of BSE and the *E. coli 0157* alarms, over-production continues apace.

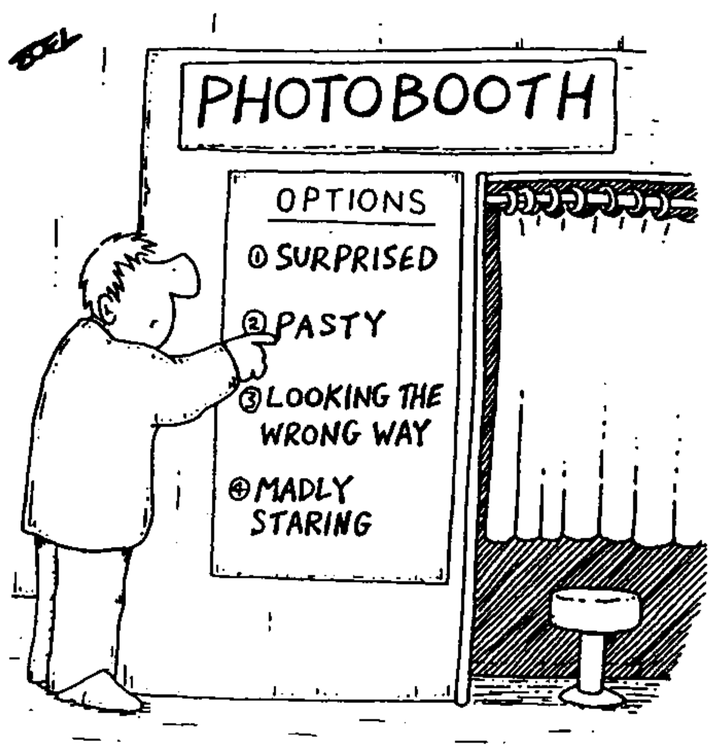
Thanks to the munificence of the European Union's common agricultural policy (CAP), however, the surplus is being bought by national governments and placed into freezers for long-term storage — the so-called "intervention" scheme.

But so drastic has been the fall-off in eating beef that the quantity in storage is now set to exceed two million tons by the year 2001. With no great increase in beef sales predicted, the new "beef mountain" could reach four million tons by 2005.

These figures are beginning to sound alarm bells in Brussels. Never before has the mountain of unsold beef exceeded one million tons, and the cost of buying such large quantities of beef is clearly unsustainable. But true to the bureaucratic nature of the vast Brussels subsidy machine, only now are cuts in subsidies being talked about. When and if agreement can be reached on how much less farmers will receive, it will take years for any new subsidy scheme to come into effect.

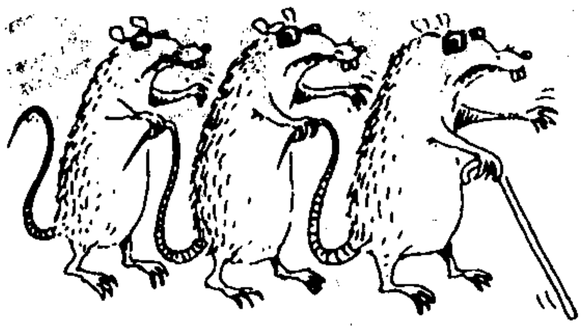
Of course no thought at all has been given to the one simple remedy which would ensure rapid clearance of stocks — dropping the price to consumers. That, of course, is not permitted.

'New Muckspreader'



JUST FANCY THAT!

ARP, a special needs housing association, advertised in the London *Evening Standard* for and "African/Caribbean Administrative Officer". Apart from good word processing skills and telephone manner, ARP insisted applicants must "be able to show an understanding of equal opportunities and a commitment to anti-discriminatory practices".



Rotten Boroughs

Islington

THE Labour council is dreading a forthcoming industrial tribunal into allegations that former Islington social worker Michael Rosenbaum was unfairly dismissed.

Rosenbaum, who worked for Islington for 12 years, claims he was ousted for exposing details of alleged child sex abuse in the borough's residential homes in the 1980s.

Islington tried but was unable to cover up the *scandal* for long. There was an inquiry — the White report — and heads rolled. Now, thanks to Rosenbaum's appeal, more details should emerge. For instance, although the report found evidence suggesting that more than 30 council officers were involved in a local paedophile ring as potential abusers, their names were never made public.

Current social workers are not convinced by council claims that abuse is a thing of the past and that the borough's homes have been cleaned up. This was the official line at around the time Jason Swift, the 14-year-old boy murdered by paedophiles on Hackney's Kingsmead Estate, was abducted from an Islington home a few days before his death in 1985. Social workers now want a new investigation into allegations of abuse of children taken from Islington homes to Essex caravan parks.

Cat Fights of the Week

ONE of Lata Patel's last engagements as Labour mayor of Bent was a bout of fisticuffs with a local shopkeeper.

She opened her front door to find the irate proprietor of Neelam's Beauty Parlour demanding £169 for a past beauty treatment. Words were exchanged then fists.

The beautician emerged with bruising and scratches; the mayor with a bump on her head. Fortunately her wounds didn't show on TV on election night when she announced Bent's results at Winnie Mandela House.

Meanwhile Pauline Jarman, 51, leader of Plaid Cymru on Rhondda Cynon Taff borough council, ended up horizontal after she and Carolyn Dower, wife of Labour councillor Terry Dower, squared up at a council charity dance at Llantrisant leisure centre.

Talk had turned to Mrs Jarman's friend and fellow nationalist Dilys Lewis, who was recently sentenced to two months' jail for forging proxy voters' forms in the 1995 council election (*Eye* 921). In the fracas Mrs Jarman hit the floor. Her opponent admitted pushing her while Mrs Jarman affirmed that she'd been drinking tonic water all evening. (The forgeries didn't prevent Terry Dower winning by more than 200 votes.)

Con of the Week

MANCHESTER has been staging the world table tennis championships, the latest of several mini-events leading to its hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games. For years the Labour council has said these extravaganzas would not cost taxpayers a penny — yet the games are set to lose around £100,000. Why?

Hardly any spectators turned up for most of the matches; the city threw money at competitors by offering to pay air fares and accommodation when one would normally have expected the home countries — China, Japan, etc, and their respective sports associations — to pay; and TV coverage on which Manchester was banking was knocked off the screen by the world snooker championships.

Who can Mancunians blame? Why not start with the man whose megalomania has made Manchester the world capital of sports events nobody wants: the newly-elected MP for Manchester Blackley, Graham Stringer?

Lavatory humour

SOUND advice has been given by a poster issued by the Oxford Lesbian and Gay Centre: "If you are male, use the Gent's Loo. Usually marked GENTS or [picture of Gent's sign]. If you are female, use the women's loo. Usually marked Ladies or [picture of Ladies sign]. If you don't know, please ask for advice behind the bar and someone will recommend which loo to use."

Merthyr

RESIDENTS of Dowlais, Merthyr, want to know why Alan Davies, a car auction owner, seems able to extend his site without planning permission.

When he developed its southern end in 1995, locals persuaded the borough council to issue an enforcement notice which led to a planning inquiry last summer. Despite admitting that the development was in breach of planning controls, that it had inadequate access and was a nuisance, the inspector decided that as Davies had already done the work his appeal should succeed.

This was not the first time he had received retrospective permission on the grounds that work had already been done. So how has he escaped the normally rigorous planning restrictions?

The fact that Les Martin, borough engineer, is father-in-law to Davies's daughter is irrelevant because he has always declared his interest in council. But Roger Morris, the Merthyr chief executive, has been more coy. Rog, who is fond of day trips (*Eyes passim*), spent a day at Royal Ascot in 1992 courtesy of Davies whose horse, Marine Diver, was running. "Daytripper" also joined Davies's company's team in Cardiff golf tournaments and the pair are close neighbours.

Pseuds Corner

Arguably KPMG is not the most likely name to be associated with Product Placement. When you look at all the household brand names that are currently involved in this area; Coca Cola, Calvin Klein, Ford Motor company, Pepsi, etc KPMG does not seemingly fit into the Product Placement arena. Why shouldn't accountants have a major part to play in the images that are portrayed on the big screen?

Accountants are an important part of most people's lives be it personal or business and KPMG's position at the centre of the accountancy profession means that they provide advice and a flawless technical service at the highest level.

KPMG Marketing gibberish

sad

**Editor's choice from Still,
a journal of short verse**

My lunch consists of dried fish eggs from Somalia or a rice cake. I hardly converse: in fact I'm so uncommunicative that my entourage say I could die standing and nobody would notice.

**PHILIPPE STARCK
Sunday Times Times Magazine**

Sir,
After the Moment of Truth — all those blue-rosetted corpses whirling along the nation's neglected and crumbling sewage pipes — we face the Moment of Ecdysiasm. At last, New Labour's troupe of swaying odalisques must start shedding fabric in their Dance of the 40 Veils.

**JOHN SHEPPARD
Letter in the Independent**

Martin Rowson, cartoonist & collaborator
"His [Will Self's] reputation precedes him as some kind of druggie monster, but he's not like that at all — he's very sentimental and soft-hearted. One thing sums it up. We were covering the Newbury roads protest, and drove down there to see the donga camp and he was giving me directions round the back streets from his house in White City, and he suddenly said, 'Watch out for that bussy-wussy, Marty!' — which I found terribly endearing. 'Bussy-wussy' words often drop into his conversation, and I have to ask myself, 'Would William Burroughs say something like that?' "

Independent

Bosnia was surely easier than this. Driving down the hill into Macclesfield with Nigel Bateson, my cameraman there and in the Gulf and now on unpaid leave of absence to help me, we conclude it is much like driving down the Mount Igman road into Sarajevo under fire. Much the same gradient but different dangers.

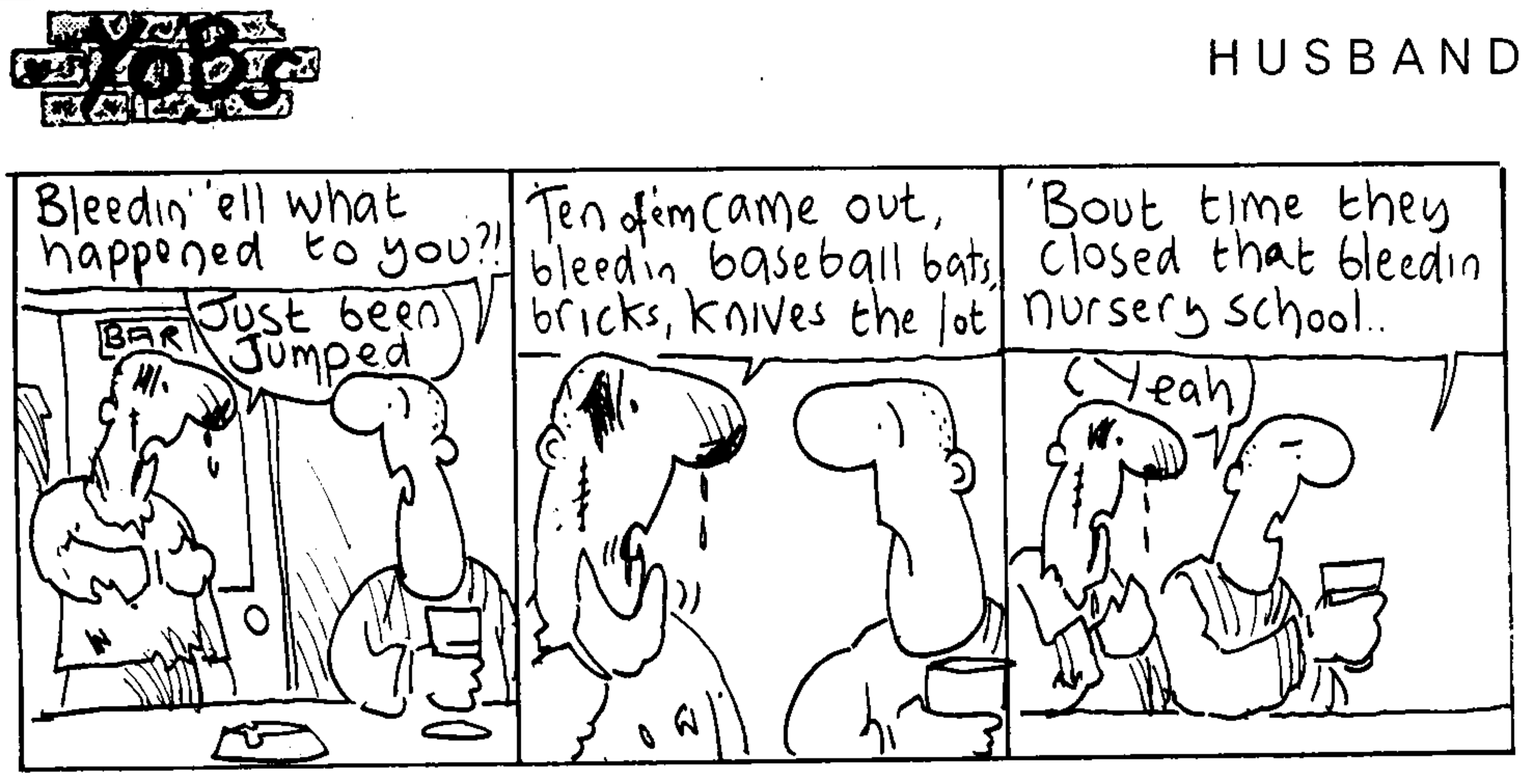
**MARTIN BELL
Guardian**

What is your favourite smell?
Beeswax furniture polish with overtones of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc.

**JILLY GOOLDEN
Guardian**

CONTRIBUTORS: Pete, Ron Rubin, Simon Reid-Kay, Steve Hickman, Brian Hockey, Tom Adam, J. Thomas.

£10 paid for entries


YOBS
HUSBAND
Bleedin 'ell what happened to you?!
Just been Jumped
BAR
Ten of 'em came out, bleedin baseball bats, bricks, knives the lot
'Bout time they closed that bleedin nursery school..
Yeah

Letters

Planning ahead

Sir,

I was encouraged to buy your hysterical historical middle-class magazine by the good burgers [sic] of Ruislip who were waving it at last night's planning meeting. On purchasing it I was dismayed to discover that our excellent London borough of Hillingdon had been included in your rotten boroughs section. This dismay however was quickly alleviated by the characteristic mix and match of fact and fiction displayed by the journalist.

● *As 12,000 of Hillingdon's 25,000 acres are in the green belt there is little opportunity for new development and we are looking at all solutions including "brown field industrial sites", "infill sites" and bringing empty properties back into use.*

● *The council house "garden" to which you refer is a corner plot on a housing estate and the tenant knew about the new house before she moved in.*

● *I have managed to identify the "school playing field" site which turns out to be an independent GMS school selling land to a private developer to subsidise their underfunded budget. The only involvement of the council was to consider the planning application which was rejected on the grounds of lack of access.*

● *On my employment, I used to work for Coop Home Services, an organisation which seeks to empower tenants by setting up cooperatives where the tenants own and manage their homes as well as living in them. As a non-profit making organisation there was no pecuniary interest to declare but I always declared my non-pecuniary interest. To date, Coop Home Services has no freehold interest in any land in Hillingdon and now, as I am no longer an employee, I have no interest to declare.*

Yours sincerely,
JON DAVEY,
Chair of Housing, London Borough of Hillingdon.

Lookalike

Ravanelli

Les Amants

Sir,

If, as anticipated, Middlesbrough's expensive Italian import Fabrizio Ravanelli leaves the club, a suggested replacement could be the model for Magritte's "Les Amants", as they both share a remarkable similarity.

Yours sincerely,
ALLAN GODFREY,
Knebworth.

Dawn chorus

Sir,

You are quite right (Street of Shame, EYE *924). I should single-handedly have punctured the anti-Tory consensus of the British political class, trounced Tony Blair, outmanoeuvred Peter Mandelson and crushed the smoothest machine ever to fight a British election. My failure to do so was a shameful disgrace, and I regret it deeply. But I would still rather be a rottweiler than a Labour lapdog, and I am happy to be called bonkers by those who seriously think that the new government will bring a new dawn.*

PETER HITCHENS,
London SE1.

Fee good factor

Sir,

It is incorrect to assert that "money saved (at the BBC)... will be used to start a series of new subscription channels" — Media News, EYE *924. It is a fundamental principle that the BBC does not use licence fee funds (or the World Service's grant-in-aid funding) to finance the BBC's commercial activities. It is for this reason that we seek partnerships to finance our new commercial activities, as evidenced by the recent joint venture formed with Flextech to launch subscription channels in the UK. The BBC's share of the revenues from these ventures is re-invested in free-to-air programmes and services for the benefit of licence payers.*

Yours faithfully,
COLIN BROWNE,
Director of Corporate Affairs, BBC.

Bølløcks

Sir,

*Whilst I admire your journal, let me please add one voice of criticism. The otherwise amusing cartoon on Swedish self-build furniture (*EYE *924, page 20) was spoilt by the mistaken use of the letter ø. This is not the first time this letter has been used in discussions of things Swedish (*EYES PASSIM*). To clear this up once and for all, please note for your further reference that Swedish has three additional letters to English: å, ä, and ö. The letter ø belongs to the Danes and Norwegians, I think you should be told.*

Yours sincerely,
JULIUS ROCCA,
Cambridge.

Suitable donor

Sir,

It would be refreshing if, occasionally, PRIVATE EYE *would check the facts.*

Any damages paid to me in libel actions have been donated to charity. I did not accept £50,000 from a local newspaper; it was awarded by a jury after a full hearing. I did accept a settlement of £30,000 from PRIVATE EYE *after its counsel was made aware of who benefited from the earlier £50,000 jury award. (**This fact is not correct. The settlement had nothing to do with the previous award. Ed.**)*

I led a deputation from a Catholic maintained school which had 458 pupils, of whom 158 were non-Catholic; a classic example of natural integration. At a time when severe cuts in education were destroying the existing schools of all denominations, all such schools were opposed to setting up a new integrated school which was unnecessary and where the cost would have been at the expense of every school in the area. Only PRIVATE EYE *would criticise a pro-Union Member of Parliament for representing the best interests of education in his constituency generally and of a Catholic school in particular.*

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT McCARTNEY QC MP,
Holywood, Co. Down.

Child's play

Sir,

Re: your article, "Wallpapering Over the Cracks" (2 May). Our organisation is threatened with relocation (at best) and homelessness (at worst); should this proposal go ahead. As a voluntary agency which has been offering a support and advice service to the 80 toddler groups in the borough of Islington for over 20 years, we have already suffered nine moves.

The plans suggest that our building, the Old Coach House, will be demolished to make room for the building of a printing press. May I suggest that those members in support of this move ask the "voiceless members" of their constituencies — the young children growing up in this borough, which service they would prefer?

TERESA McGOWAN,
Coordinator, Islington Under Threes Group.

Making a splash

Sir,

Further to Nigel Turner's letter in EYE *924, I was born with hypospadias, I understood the cartoon, I thought it funny. There are, after all, worse things to be born with — lack of sense of humour being one.*

Yours whilst filling my boots,
I.M. DAVIES JONES,
Leicester.

You can't Darwin 'em all

Sir,

In disparaging others for their lack of research, I fear Anthony Wernham has fallen into the same trap. As he wrote to you via e-mail I presume he has access to the internet on which there exists a "Darwin Awards Official Home Page". (http://www.dnaco.net/~jimpen/darwin/darwin.html) Is this by any chance related? I think we should be told.

Yours fraternally,
ADRIAN CHELL,
Via e-mail.

Farewell... er, that's it

Sir,

Sir Roy Strong — flowing blond locks — blunt outspoken opinions. Sounds just like a Spice Girl. Perhaps he thinks he **is** *a Spice Girl? He's even given himself his own title: "Circumspice" (*EYE *924)!*

*And another thing — Bookworm (*EYE *924) should have checked his facts about Haydn's "Farewell" Symphony. At the end the musicians leave the stage until* **two** *violinists (not "a single violinist") are left playing alone — ie, even the conductor decides enough is enough (as Haydn had when he wrote the piece).*

Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER MABLEY,
Director of Music, St Olave's, Orpington.

"One fish finger! Not much of a school reunion, is it?"

I-SPY

Prague

Submitted by Richard Langer. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies)*

Fly paper

Sir,

I was amazed to be alerted to Professor Smith's recent letter of the MRC Toxicology Unit that misappropriately dragged me and my work on the OP warble fly insecticide "phosmet" and BSE into some brawl over Zeneca funding and MRC research partiality.

Prof Smith alleges that in order to sidestep the MRC trial results which supposedly invalidated my theory, I had been forced to alter my theory into a new one; in which I no longer claim that OPs — as a generic group — are causing BSE but that a specific OP called "phosmet" is responsible by modifying the prion protein.

Immediately prior to this MRC trial being executed in the summer of 1995, I was invited to deliver a lecture plus send a copy of my latest pre-publication papers on my theory to them. Both of these communications categorically conveyed that my theory homed in upon "phosmet" as the prime candidate under suspicion of BSE causation. The MRC clearly got the gist of this fact, witnessed by the fact that they cited "phosmet" in a fax sent by Dr David Ray of the MRC to Lauderdale productions — a company who were preparing to film a documentary around this MRC trial for Channel 4 — where, again, I was filmed putting my finger on phosmet as the dirty detonator of BSE.

Clearly, the only person who is changing my theory is Prof Smith, along with all the other members of the multinational-ministerial brotherhood who have wheeled this one out to clout me down on so many occasions.

I wonder whether Prof Smith will still continue to daub my "new" theory as "extremely implausible" when the test results from the proper trial which used phosmet hits the pages of the academic journals. For phosmet has produced an abnormal, pathogenic prion protein.

Yours sincerely,
MARK "WARBLE FLY" PURDEY,
Taunton, Somerset.

Combined operation

Sir,

Sometimes I worry about the EYE.

*The Tory-inspired police investigation code-named Operation Angel (with its links to the Pergau Dam and Owen Oyston scandals via former ministers Sir Nicholas Lyell, Sir Peter Blaker and Mr Robert Atkins) was stated, presumably after your usual thorough checking, to have been "an abortive police investigation into Labour politicians that has cost at least £10m... in which the names of two 'sensitive' police informers have been blotted out by the Crown Prosecution Service" (*EYE *922).*

*But then your general election edition (*EYE *923) under the heading "Keeping Quiet On The Preston Front" suggested, without any evidence, that Operation Angel concerned "crooked council folk" and "town hall corruption," when it seems to be the police and the CPS who, not surprisingly, are exercising their right of silence!!!*

Shurely shome mishtake?

Yours faithfully,
R.D. READ,
Skelsmergh, Cumbria.

Mother superior

Sir,

Re: Advert in PRIVATE EYE *for "Janet & John's Hot Weekend" by Jo Bedingfield. Do you really have to advertise the filth my daughter writes? I thought that you were a respectable young man, with a sense of decency.*

Apparently not.

Yours disgusted,
ROZANNA BEDINGFIELD (MRS),
Bath, Somerset.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"As Phil De Glanville said, each game is unique — and this one is no different to any other."

JOHN SLEIGHTHOLME, Radio 5 Live
(Nick Snowdown)

"It's now two-nil to England with two to play — and they're both to come."

MARK NICHOLAS, Sky Sport
(Peter Woodhouse)

"Heathrow could be a lot less congested if there were not so many people milling around."

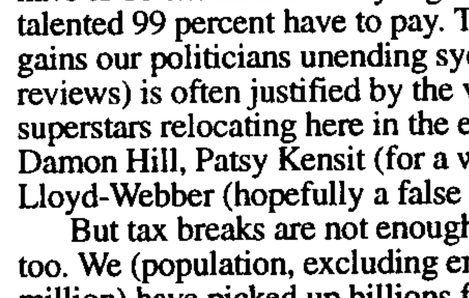
SIR MICHAEL BISHOP, Sunday Times
(Harry Baker)

"We signed to play until the day we died, and we did."

JIMMY GREAVES, ITV
(Sam Barr)

"We were, in rugby terms, dyslexic."

JACK ROWELL (England coach), BBC1
(Tony Willis)



Letter From **Dublin**

from Our Own Correspondent

TONY BLAIR saw in the new year here — well, in costly West Cork anyway, at the very nice holiday home of his chum Sir David Puttnam, the film producer. Apart from trying to recall David's last box office hit, Tony would have witnessed our "economic miracle" (Irish bricklayers building branches of Boots and Dixons in Dublin, rather than just Belfast, Edinburgh or London). He also encountered our state-funded aesthetes.

In other countries luvvies claim to want to pay much more tax. But *our* artistes are so sensitive they have to be excused the very high levels the less talented 99 percent have to pay. This policy (which gains our politicians unending sycophancy and good reviews) is often justified by the vast number of superstars relocating here in the elite's wake — Damon Hill, Patsy Kensit (for a while) and Andrew Lloyd-Webber (hopefully a false alarm).

But tax breaks are not enough. We need subsidies too. We (population, excluding emigrants, 3.6 million) have picked up billions from Brussels since joining the European Union (our politicians didn't want to join, but since Britain had, they felt obliged.) Peripheral institutions — police, army, public housing, etc, which didn't qualify for Eurodosh — have meanwhile fallen into disrepair (although our film-makers blame the criminals not their political patrons for the intractability of, say, Dublin's drug problem).

Accordingly we need more subsidy. Our leaders have stressed that we're still very deprived and deserve yet more billions after 1999 (when our current subvention runs out) with annual top-ups after that. Oddly as polling day nears, the current line is that actually we're now one of the richest EU countries and much better off than the (net EU contributing) UK. So expect a reversion to the mendicant mode after the election: civil servants are already drafting elaborate papers which (although we are terribly well off) divide the country into lots of, er, conveniently poor regions ripe for massive subsidy.

Apart from EU aid, there are other factors behind our amazing economic statistics. Tourism has soared, although there are now signs of decline. And during the late 80s we managed to lose a fair chunk of the population. The French and Germans must regret they too weren't able to persuade millions to emigrate and so make their per capita figures look so much better and avoid all that nasty EMU fudging.

Most usefully we've attracted loads of multi-nationals — particularly job creating computer companies, although our hi-tech friends aren't keen on paying tax. As well as vast (EU-funded) golden hellos, industrial and financial service companies pay just 10 percent corporation tax. That's not enough to pay for public services, and apart from EU funding the gap is made up by a brutal PAYE regime: low personal allowances, basic rate of 26 percent and a top rate of 48 percent which people pay on under half the average industrial wage.

Unfortunately questions are now being asked about whether this makes sense for our donors. The Germans are upset about Dublin's Financial Services Centre, which electronically receives profits from companies in Frankfurt, magically makes them Irish temporarily — but just long enough to qualify for our 10 percent tax rate — and then repatriates them avoiding the German revenue. More blatantly IBM is switching work from its plant near Edinburgh to a new (vastly subsidised) Dublin base, citing our better education system. Really, it's coming for the tax breaks.

Even some gullible Eurocrats appear to be tiring of our status as a simultaneously booming but deprived special case. That's why, while your newspapers advise investing in the "Celtic Tiger", our financial institutions are voting with their capital and moving it off the island in case EMU goes wrong. Allied Irish Bank is desperately trying to build up its assets in America and Britain — swapping our dynamic Irish punt for the dollar and sterling.

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

FUNNY OLD WORLD

● "Women. Getting Married? Then why not regain your lost innocence before your wedding night?

"If you are experienced, but still wish to please your husband-to-be, then come to Dr Liu and let him restore your virginity. For only 3,500 HK dollars, Dr Liu will replace your lost hymen. The operation takes only thirty minutes under local anaesthetic, and your husband need never know how many boyfriends you have had in the past. Thousands of Hong Kong brides have been fully satisfied by Dr Liu.

"Do not confuse Dr Liu's clinic with bogus clinics in Shenzhen. They charge less but they are no good. They use sheep tissue, and cater for prostitutes who want a new hymen every few days. Dr Liu's clinic is staffed by professors from Guangzhou public hospital, and we use only grafts from your own skin, bird feathers, and putty. No mess. No smell. Discretion guaranteed. Dr Liu is also available for breast enlargement, buttock tucking, nose reshaping, toe dislocation, and facial hair removal. Prices available on request." *(Borneo Bulletin, 15/16 Feb. '97. Spotter: John Suffolk)*

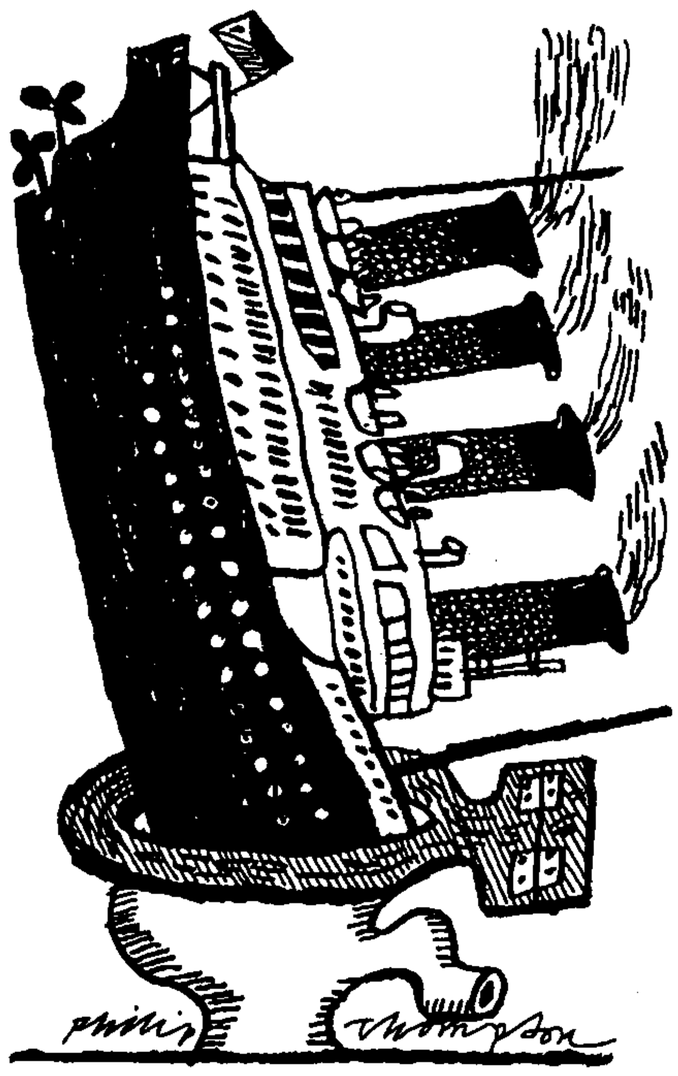
—●—

● *"It will be a long time before I forget this incident," Juan Malat told Mallorcan police after charges of suspected child abuse against him were dropped. "And what made it ten times worse was that I was arrested at work. My private life is my own business, and I regard this whole affair as a gross defamation of my character."*

Defence counsel for Malat, a thirty-year-old carpenter from Palma, had earlier explained to the court what had happened late on the previous Saturday night. "My client is a lonely man, and often enjoys the company of an inflatable doll. On this occasion, he drove to a deserted area of the city, inflated the doll, got undressed, and commenced vigorous intercourse in the back of his car. Unfortunately for him, three passing youths heard his cries, saw his car rocking to and fro, and went to investigate. Peering through the window, they saw what they assumed was a young girl being raped by a man, so they began banging on the windows, hoping to free the child. But my client, who was still naked, panicked, started the engine and drove off. The youths noted the license plate and reported the incident to police, who arrested my client at his workplace in front of colleagues and customers." (The Reader [Mallorca], February '97. Spotter: Ian Morrison)

● **"The first time I realised something was wrong was when I went to the toilet and saw a piece of nylon twine sticking out of my rectum," Job Naquita told reporters at Batangas Hospital. "I cried out to my wife, 'honey pull this out my butt real quick', but I screamed in pain every time she tried. So we came here to the hospital and they looked inside and discovered a three-inch-long fishing hook and a metre of fishing line lodged in my rectal cavity, about an inch from my anal opening."**

After the hook had been removed under anaesthetic by Dr Protacio Bathan, Naquita speculated on how he might have swallowed the hook."All I can think of is that we had biya fish for pulutan [New Year]. Biya fish come from Taal lake, and the fishermen there have a habit of jerking off the fishing hooks from their catch to speed things up. Perhaps the line broke and the hook got lodged in the gills of the fish. I'd had a lot to drink that night.

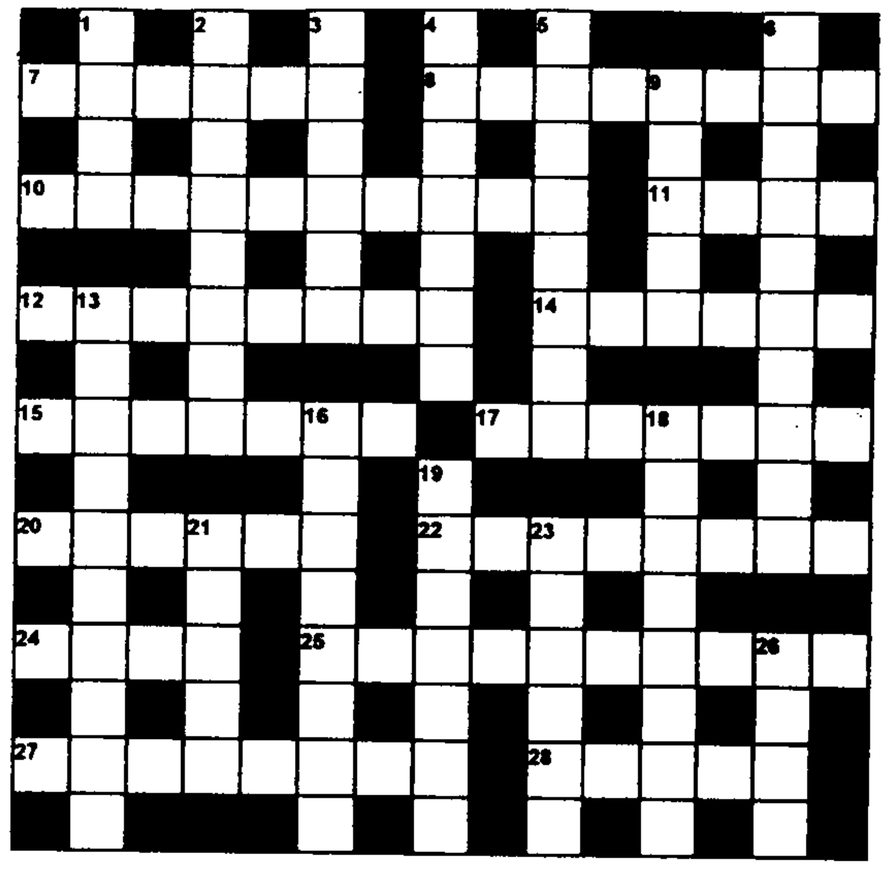


"I still have nightmares about this. In the last one, I crapped an entire ocean liner. It is a miracle that it didn't get stuck in my stomach or intestines after I swallowed it. As it had reached my rectum before it got embedded, it was much easier to get out. But I tell you, that is the last time I ever eat sinaing na biya, New Year or no." *(Tempo [Philippines], 18/1/97. Spotter: Don Tranter)*

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

EYE CROSSWORD 80

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

7 Bearish unseated familiar philanderer (6)
8 A day for those in purgatory when one takes fifty pound on spirits (3,5)
10 Become a prisoner on getting oats following affair (2,8)
11/14 Fat held to be an aid to sex? (4,7)
12 Sly point to big 'un (8)
14 Are yet to be put out by a Little Chef, for instance (6)
15 Bureaucracy's bloody record (3,4)
17 A place for the pilot's member — next to mine (7)
20 Our Elizabeth gets supporter to hold butt (6)
22 To toss back hair is a load of nonsense (8)
24 Some virgin, Cherie — creep! (4)
25 Smacker setting tongues wagging (6,4)
27 Brenda backed by people generally? Not in this sort of state! (8)
28 (see 13)

DOWN

1 Hardly the sort of note acceptable to Goldsmith and his supporters (4)
2 Dodgy operator — are Oflot making little difference? (8)
3 Speaker alone cannot produce such an effect (6)
4 (see 11)
5 Turn to big-headedness as your second nature? (5,3)
6 Smart arse Conservative bar on Eye (6,4)
9 Watchdog has 2's backside (5)
13/28 Brian's body (being charitable) is not what scheming Di has any more! (3,7,5)
16 Charlie to take plunge — what an embarrassing incident that would be! (8)
18 Brenda's leaving tits on display — what a stunner! (8)
19 Can possibly taking 'E' while acquiring mad cow disease lead to truancy? (7)
21 Former premier gets old city pecker up (5)
23 Place held by *Hallo!* categorically (6)
26 What an MP does in the House — deprives arseholes of hospital (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 06.06.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 79

Winner: ALEXANDER KEEN

ACROSS: 8 Philip 9 Own goal 10/15 Missionary position 11 Kohl 12 Diarist 13 Plants 14 Keep fit 16 Nerdish 19 Prison 21 Olivier 23 Scot 24 Tinsel town 25 Plonker 26 Cock-Up.

DOWN: 1 The Indie 2 Plasma 3 Opposition 4 Royalty 5 Andy 6/18 Nooks and Corners 7 Old hat 13 Presidency 15 (See 10) 17 Screws up 18 (See 6) 20 Recipe 22 Intact 24 Toke.

The Lottery Winners

TURNER

.. AND CAN YOU MAKE A LIVING BEING AN ARTIST?
NO, I'VE ONLY SOLD ONE PAINTING...
DORIS! GET THIS MAN A PIE AND A PINT.
.. FORTUNATELY, I'VE A £2 MILLION LOTTERY WIN TO FALL BACK ON...

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

FROM THE VICAR

Hullo again!

Well, quite a week! I said we would hit the ground running and we certainly did! As one old parishioner said to me last week, "Vicar, you've certainly made some changes." I told her, "Firstly, it's Tony, not Vicar! And, secondly, you mustn't be afraid of change! Because change is good for us all! In moderation of course! Too much change, and you don't know where you are!"

And talking of change, don't think you have to change to come to church! Come as you are — jeans, leggings, trainers, whatever you feel comfortable in! It's not what you wear that matters, it's your attitude that God notices!

I was personally very sorry to see Mr Banks, who is now in charge of St Albion's Sports Committee, making a disrespectful gesture during the service last week. Mr Banks may have thought it was funny, but God didn't!

There has also been a lot of idle gossip about Mr Sarwar, who though of another faith is very much part of the parish.

I think it would be charitable of us not to judge Mr Sarwar until the full facts have been looked into by a sub-committee of the PCC. But in the meantime, Mr Mandelson has sensibly suggested that none of us should go into Mr Sarwar's Cash and Carry shop, until the whole thing is cleared up.

Now, that's enough bad news! We're here to spread the good news!

Mr Brown has had made a wonderful start in reorganising the church finances! I haven't got space here to list all the important changes he has made, most of which I don't understand! But he tells me he has set up a new steering group to oversee all the accounts of the various

committees, to make sure that everything is run efficiently. It may sound boring, but it's jolly important!

Dr Mowlam and I went off for a weekend outreach visit to our mission in Northern Ireland. We were both of us filled with hope for the future of that province. It's not been much fun for them all in recent years, but now there is a real sense of everyone working together for a more positive future!

As I said in my sermon at St Gerry's, "We must all get on the peace train. It's leaving now and we don't want anyone left behind on the platform."

Mo (that's Dr Mowlam!) was kind enough to suggest that I should turn these thoughts into a song! So, that's what we'll be having at Evensong on Sunday, and guess who'll be playing the guitar!

See you there!

Tony

PS. I gather some of you are a bit upset about my having tea with a former lady incumbent of this parish. OK, so she left under a bit of a cloud, but it's my job to build bridges and heal rifts —not to go around throwing stones! Enough said, I hope!

ST ALBION'S CHURCH SCHOOL

MR BLUNKETT, CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS, WRITES:

There has been a lot of concern from Albonian parents about falling standards. I want to make it clear that I am taking this very seriously indeed (and in this I have full support from Tony). From now on:

1) All children are expected to do five hours' homework every night and to obey the 6pm curfew.

2) All use of modern teaching aids, such as pocket calculators, biros etc, will be banned.

3) There will be a re-introduction of rote-learning, propper spelling and numeracy skills.

5) If teachers do not comply with this, the school will be closed down.

DB.

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Mandelson, whose father passed away many years ago, but grief sometimes takes a long time to catch up! I think this whole thing has reminded us that one should never judge by appearances, and that even the toughest exterior can conceal a real old softie underneath!

TB.

A Message From Our Churchwarden Mr Mandelson

Please note that my commitments are such that I cannot be expected to answer any questions on church business unless these are put to me in writing.

I also want to make it clear that Mrs Mortimer's advertised talk on "The Joys of Foxhunting" has on my instructions been cancelled, due to lack of interest. Instead, Mr Banks has at short notice kindly agreed to talk instead on "The Fox — Our Friend". I would like everyone to show their appreciation by turning up.

PM.

Verses By A Local Poet

The New Dawn

It is a new dawn!
The sun is climbing in the sky
Like a great red ball.
England! England!
We are coming home!

B. Pimlott
St Albion's Primary, 3C.

CHERIE: Getting to know you!

Note From The Editor, Mr Campbell

As from this issue, we have made it a rule that this newsletter will not carry any full-colour advertisements from multi-national tobacco companies. We do not want to give any encouragement to this filthy and dangerous habit. (Hear! Hear! TB.)

Next issue please could all contributors get their copy in early so that I can re-write it.

Peter McLie

The World's Worst Columnist

I SALUTE my employer Lord Rothermere, the last of the great Tory press barons! When others have lost their nerve and defected to the socialists, young Vere has nailed his colours firmly to the mast! True Blue, through and through, he is a fine and dandy Tory Grandee!

THE Conservative Party are looking, I hear, for a new leader. I have a suggestion: step forward John Major. This young man would be a breath of fresh air to a tired and jaded party! And no one can say he lacks experience. Go on, vote for John. I'm sure the country will next time round.

THE cricket season seems to go on longer and longer every year — here we are in flamin' June and they are still at it. Why can't we have a new game to play in the summer? Why not, for example, two sides of eleven men chasing a round leather ball which they have to kick into a net suspended by white posts?! I even have a name for such a sport: Association Trouser Press. *(You're fired. Ed.)*

GLENDA SLAGG

The One-Woman Spice Girls!?!!

MAGGIE'S back!?? Well excooose me, mister!?! I thought we'd seen the last of that old crone when she climbed on her broomstick and flew into the sunset!?! *(shurely 'Moonshine'? Ed.)* **Now we see so-called New Labour Blair a-crawlin' and a-fawnin' to Mystic Mag in the hope of getting some answers from her crystal balls!?!! Here's one prediction from Madame Glenda: stick with Maggie mate and you can kiss Downing Street goodbye!?!!**

HATS off to Tony Blair!? At last a Labour leader has had the guts to talk to the one person in the country that everyone admires!? There he was going round to her house, cloth cap in hand, asking: "Maggie! Maggie! Maggie! What on earth do I do now?".

OK, so she may be old and mad, but this geriatric granny has got more wisdom in her little finger than all the jumped up schoolboys in the cabinet put together!? Three cheers for the new double act — Tony and Maggie!?!

HELEN Mirren — Aren'tchasick-ofher? Prime Suspect? Past-Your-Prime I suspect!? (Geddit?!!) So some magazine reckons you're the world's sexiest woman!?! What is it?! The magazine of the Royal National Institute of the Blind?!! Clear off DCI Tennison so called and put yourself away for a long time!?!

HELEN Mirren — what a star!? 51 years old and you would never know it?! Svelte, sexy and simply super!?! No wonder the public have acclaimed her the most beautiful woman since Cleopatra!?! If I look like that when I'm 51 I shall die a happy woman!?! *(Who are you trying to kid? Ed.)*

SEEN Teletubbies?! Me neither!!

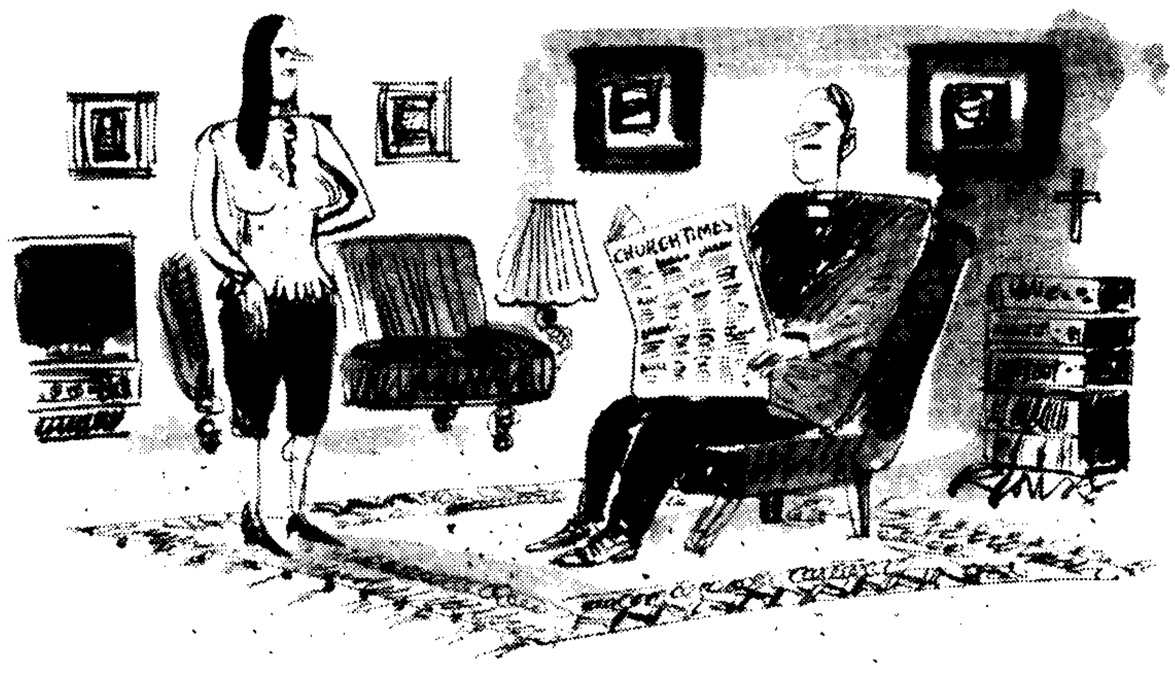
HERE they are Glenda's Chelsea Floor Show!?

● **Lord Chadlington** — he's the sexy supremo of the Royal Opera House! And he's Selwyn Gummer's brother?! What more could any gal want?

● **R.B. Kitaj** — The World's greatest painter is quitting Britain for ever?! Pleazze reconsider Mr K? I do a bit of nude modelling and I might get my Kitaj off for you — Geddit!?!

● **Mohammed Sarwar** — Crazy name, crazy bribe! *(surely 'Guy' Ed?)*

Byeeee!



"And that's another thing – you're too ecumenical with the truth"

50 MOST POWERFUL WOMEN IN BRITAIN — ***Reprinted from the Guardian***

Part 94.

Annie Cockup, 47.

Formerly executive head of the prestigious Child Support Agency.
Enormously incompetent and unpopular, she lost millions of pounds before being shunted off to another very important job.

Barbara Messe, 53.

Formerly executive head of the prestigious Serious Fraud Office.
She impressed colleagues by her failure to jail anyone at all and her ability to lose millions of pounds of taxpayers' money. She has since been transferred to an even more vital post.

Stella Dimmington, 61.

Formerly executive head and first woman to run MI5.
She overcame initial prejudice to prove she was every bit as useless as her male predecessors. She wasted millions of pounds telling the public how secret the Secret Service was.

Tomorrow
Rosie Borecott, Suzanne Bore, Helen Borer and some other women in the media who are friends of ours.

November 4th 1605

THE LORD'S DAYLY TELEGRAPH

Outrage As 'Plotters' Enter Parliament

by Our Political Staff Boris Johnfon

YE MOTHER of Parliaments was in uproar yefterday as Mafter Fawkes and Mafter Catefby paid a visit to the House of Commons.

Ye two reprefentatives of the Gunpowder community dined heartily at ye agreeable subfidifed buffet before attempting to take a guided tour of ye famous cellars. Mefsrs Fawkes and Catefby were however barred from taking ye part in any of ye proceedings of His Majefty's Parliament.

"This is exceeding irkfome," saith Master Fawkes. "Ye only thinge we are defirous of doing is to enter ye Parliament and blow it up. What is ye problem with that?"

YE LUNCHEON IN FULL

Smoked Commons

Charred Lords

Bombe Surprife

ON OTHER PAGES

MAFTER TONY BENN: why oh why have ye innocent plotters been reftricted from their democratic right to explode their opinions? *(Surely you meaneth 'exprefs their opinions'?* Ye Editor) 7

Playeth ye Telegraph Fantafy Bowls and winneth an top-of-the- range Sedan chair 9

Unfunny cartoon by Jakobite 27

WORLD OF PUBLISHING

TITANIC TO BE RELAUNCHED

by Our Magazine Staff **Punchtime O'Dear**

THE Titanic, once a by-word for sophistication, elegance and British style, is to be relaunched by Egyptian millionaire Mohamed Al-Fayed.

The new-look Titanic will be totally different from its previous incarnation, now to be found at the bottom of the Atlantic, promises its new captain, the American-born Spike Allgags.

"There will be new deckchairs, a New York style band playing 'Abide With Me', strippers in all the cabins and a lot fewer lifeboats because they get in the way."

Spike continued: "I see a great future for this flagship and I really think its modern new refit will make it much more attractive. Nowadays, we're after a different sort of passenger — the type who don't mind hitting the odd iceberg and drowning".

The exciting new redesign has dispensed with a lot of the traditional old features and now incorporates a new type of ballast made entirely from leaden material.

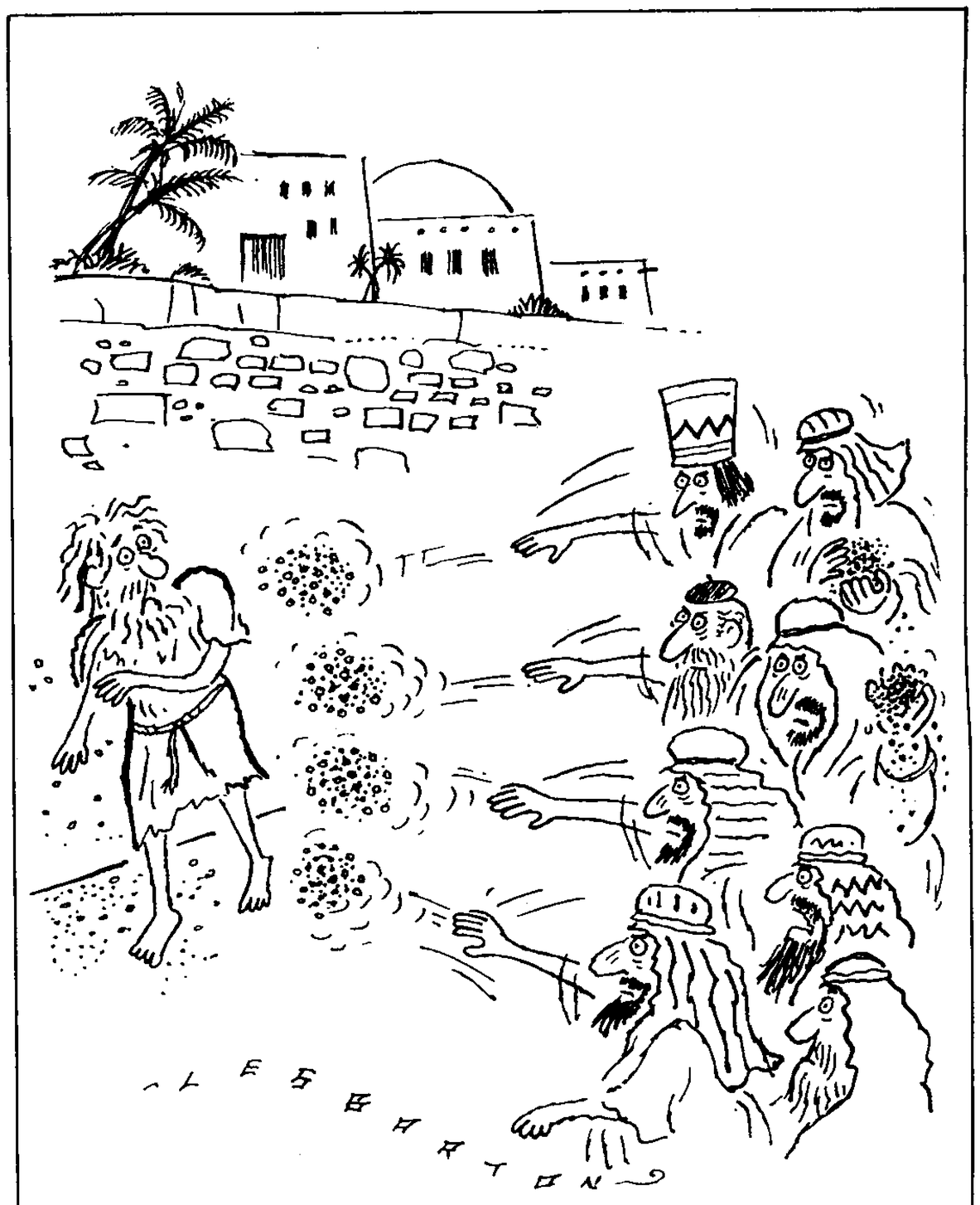
"This will definitely keep us afloat," enthused owner Mohamed All-Fayle. "This time the Titanic is really going places — like the bottom of the ocean... glug... glug... glug..."

BORING OLD LOGO

S.S.TITANIC

EXCITING NEW LOGO

S.S.*Titanic*



"We decided to let him off with a warning this time!"

£400 BILLION FACELIFT FOR STATIONS

by Our Rail Staff **Paddington Bore**

BRITAIN'S 4000 stations are to be given a £400 billion facelift.

This was the message yesterday from the £400-billion-a-year chairman of Railtrack, Sir Bob Cockup.

"Make no mistake," he told waiting PR men (Max Hastings), "this is a £400 billion facelift which will at a stroke take our decaying Victorian stations into the 21st century."

Under the £400 billion facelift plan outlined by Railtrack boss Sir Bob Cockup, you will see the following amazing changes:

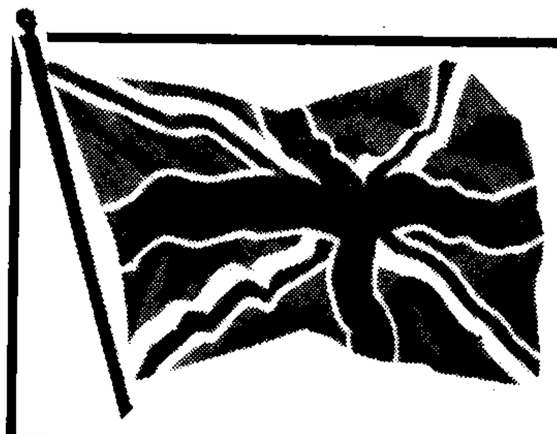
In Come

- Cash points in every toilet.
- Combined dentists-cum-sauna facilities with Internet link-ups for business executives on every concourse.
- Sumo wrestling schools in every waiting room.
- Multi-storey car showrooms for immediate driveaway motor sales in every booking hall.
- Multiplex cinema and concert facilities with international cabaret featuring such stars as Tammy Wynette and the New Seekers.
- Executive tennis courts, hang-gliding, scuba-diving and safari parks.
- Line-side blue-chip estate agents for on-the-spot purchase of luxury homes.

Out Go

- Timetables.
- Seats.
- Staff.
- Trains.

Explaining the logic behind his new £400 billion "Operation Facelift", Sir Cockup, Railtrack's £400-billion-a-year chairman, said yesterday: "Once our customers get inside one of our new Rail Experience Centres, as we are renaming the old stations, they will never want to leave — which is why we are phasing out the train dimension of our operation."



BRITAIN'S NO. 1 SPORTING EVENT

The F.A. Cup Final 1997

Chelsea v. Middlesbrough

MIDDLESBROUGH
Mobutu
Ceaucescu Guantanamera Ikea Oranjeboom
Van der Post Vorsprung Durch Technik
Portillo
Canelloni

Palestrina Shostakovich
Schnittke Björk Altarica Ipanema Zapata
De Kooning Kalahsnikov Balzac
Kebila
CHELSEA

MIDDLESBROUGH – Manager: Jacques Delors
CHELSEA – Manager: Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd
(shurely shome mishtake? Ed)

Wembley – For the Best in English Football!

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath**

13. Time for a Change

"Everyone simply wanted a change I mean I don't think anybody *really* wanted Blair to be PM all that soppy holding hands with wifey in public up-staging the Queen at the opening of Parliament absolute disgrace & the size of his majority is ridiculous I think even Labour would admit it's unhealthy for democracy for one single party to have an overall majority, unless it's the Tories, this honeymoon period won't last you mark my words in two years time they'll all be begging for John Major to come back I'm glad he's gone couldn't make up his mind on anything always dithering no I'm backing young Hague or perhaps Lilley or maybe Howard mind you Ken Clarke could be the man for the job I can't stand the bloke myself but he was a bloody good chancellor mind you this Brown fella's the man my portfolio's rocketed since they got in a Scot you see mean as measles guaranteed to keep a tight hold of the purse strings jolly good thing no they're doing a marvellous job I back them all the way Mrs Blair defended my company in the High Court when I sacked some shirkers bloody good barrister have you noticed how they call her Sher-ee? I thought it was Cherry bloody silly name either way & as for 'call me Tony' a leopard never changes his spots he used to be CND no I'm a lifelong Tory all this New Labour sleaze in Govan disgraceful the trouble is they've been in power too long people feel it's time for a change..."

HARRODS MAN THROWN OUT

'Not Suitably Honest'

by Our Kensington Staff
Dominic Harrods

AN Egyptian-born shopper was yesterday denied admittance to the United Kingdom on the grounds that he was "a fat sleazy liar" and that he had therefore broken the house rules.

Unpleasant Paunch

In his defence, Mr Al Fayed said: "This is a f***ing scandal, you f***ing bastards. My f***ing money is as good as anyone else's. In fact, it is someone else's. I spend a f***ing fortune here and give generously to f***ing charities. How dare they throw me out when so many crooks are allowed to wander around, like the Hamiltons?

ON OTHER PAGES:
Are you too fat to get into Harrods?

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Laurie Lee, Poet and Author

So. Farewell
Then Laurie
Lee.

Author of *Cider With Rosie.*

Yes, Keith
Did it for
O-Level.

I did
The Day of The Triffids
Which was
Brilliant.

E.J. Thriffid (aged 17½)

NEW BOOKS

ALCOPOPS WITH TRACY

by Laurie Lee

■ This timeless novel looks at the touching, tender relationship between two young people against the backdrop of shopping malls, off-licences and Pizza Huts. He offers her a Tangerine Screamer, and twenty B&H, whilst she innocently drops her ski pants and knickers after her third Gooseberry & Peach Growler.

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE

Everything you need to know about Britain's most popular Band

"I am a modern man," he proclaimed on Tuesday night. "I am part of the rock and roll generation — the Beatles, colour TV, that's the generation I come from." *DAILY TELEGRAPH*

Message from Tony (lead singer of Blairzone)

RIGHT! Yeah! Great! Me and the band have been in the studio for a few years (well, eighteen, actually) and we've worked up some happening ideas for the now generation — as the late great Deep Floyd put it in the concept album "The Wall", "We don't need no education, education and education" — except we do — right? Check it out! And let me tell you — you're gonna love the new Blairzone mega-mix — it's got funk, soul and attitude — sort of like Camel circa Snowgoose 1978. Right on!

And another thing — people say that Blairzone are selling out, that we are giving in to the Moneymen and the fat cats in suits. Don't believe it. What I say is "Money. It's a gas. You wear it. You share it. Dum di dum. Or something like that. That's the wise words of the late great Pink Purple circa "No smoking on the water".

See ya!
Tony

Tony Likes

Lounge Suits
Denim Shirts
Cheesecloth Kaftans

Tony Dislikes

Dinner Jackets
Tailcoats
Crooked Asian Businessmen

Tony's All-Time Faves

❶ ***Hocus Pocus by Focus Group.***

❷ ***Tough on Crime of the Century by Supertramp.***

❸ ***Anything by No Hand Guns 'n' Roses.***

❹ ***Jumping Jack Cunningham — The one and only Stones!***

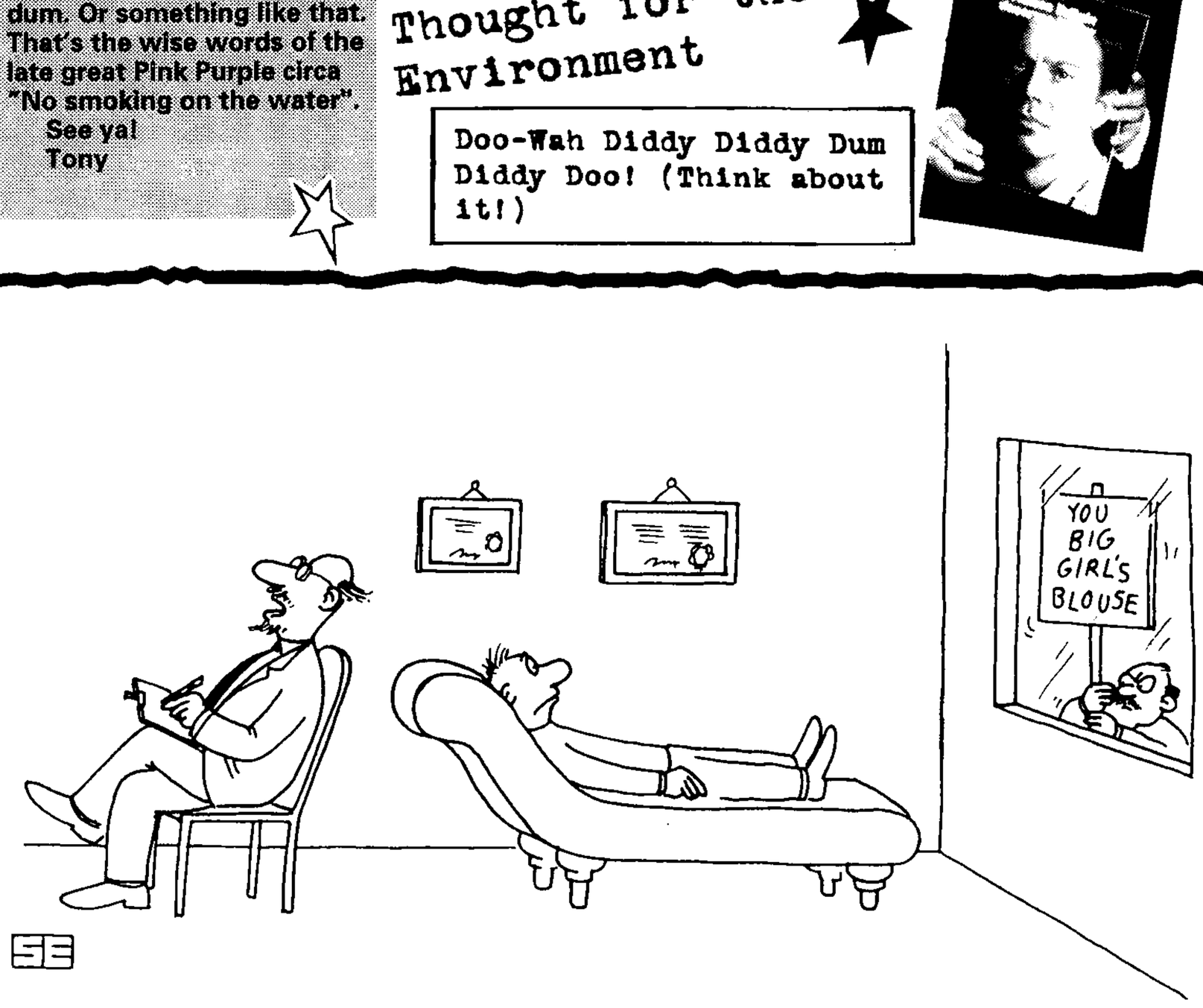
❺ ***The State We're In — Will and the Huttons.***

Where Tony Hangs Out

Marillion Gigs (Fish is a mate)
Rod Argent's Guitar 'n' Keyboard Shop
Church

Thought for the Environment

Doo-Wah Diddy Diddy Dum Diddy Doo! (Think about it!)



"And is this antagonistic relationship with your father an ongoing thing?"

NEASDEN STUNNED — IT'S ADIEU DEPARDIEU!

by **E.I. Erewego,** Our Man In The Stands With An Introductory Voucher For Two At Neasden's New Exclusive Star Of India Curry 'n' Pizza Emporium And The Phone Number Of A Latvian Nanny He Met On A Bus On The Way To The Game

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations as never before last night when Eddie Depardieu, Neasden's infamous French midfielder, told his club that he was hanging up his boots at the end of the season.

He will never again be seen in North Circular League's bottom club's No. 7 shirt, with its world-famous trademark of the collar reeking of garlic.

French Letter

Tight-lipped and ashen-faced, a visibly shocked Ron Knee, 57, said that he had received a letter of resignation from Eddie Depardieu. With the aid of a translator, Knee then read it out to the army of reporters who had gathered in disbelief at Neasden Bridge. Depardieu wrote:

Mon cher Ron. As you know, I am the world's greatest player ever, a genius, a living saint, a reconstructed post-modernist, a poet to be compared with Picasso, a greater artist than Camus, an actor in the mould of Sartre, and a philosopher to whom even Marcel Marceau would bend his knee. I am also very shy and retiring, particularly now, so goodbye for ever. You remain my humble servant. Eddie.

Ooh-Urgh-Depardieu!

Knee concluded emotionally that his erstwhile captain had admitted privately that soccer was not his whole life. "Eddie always said that he would stop playing after his fiftieth birthday. Although that was ten years ago, it has obviously had something to do with his decision to quit."

Own Gaul

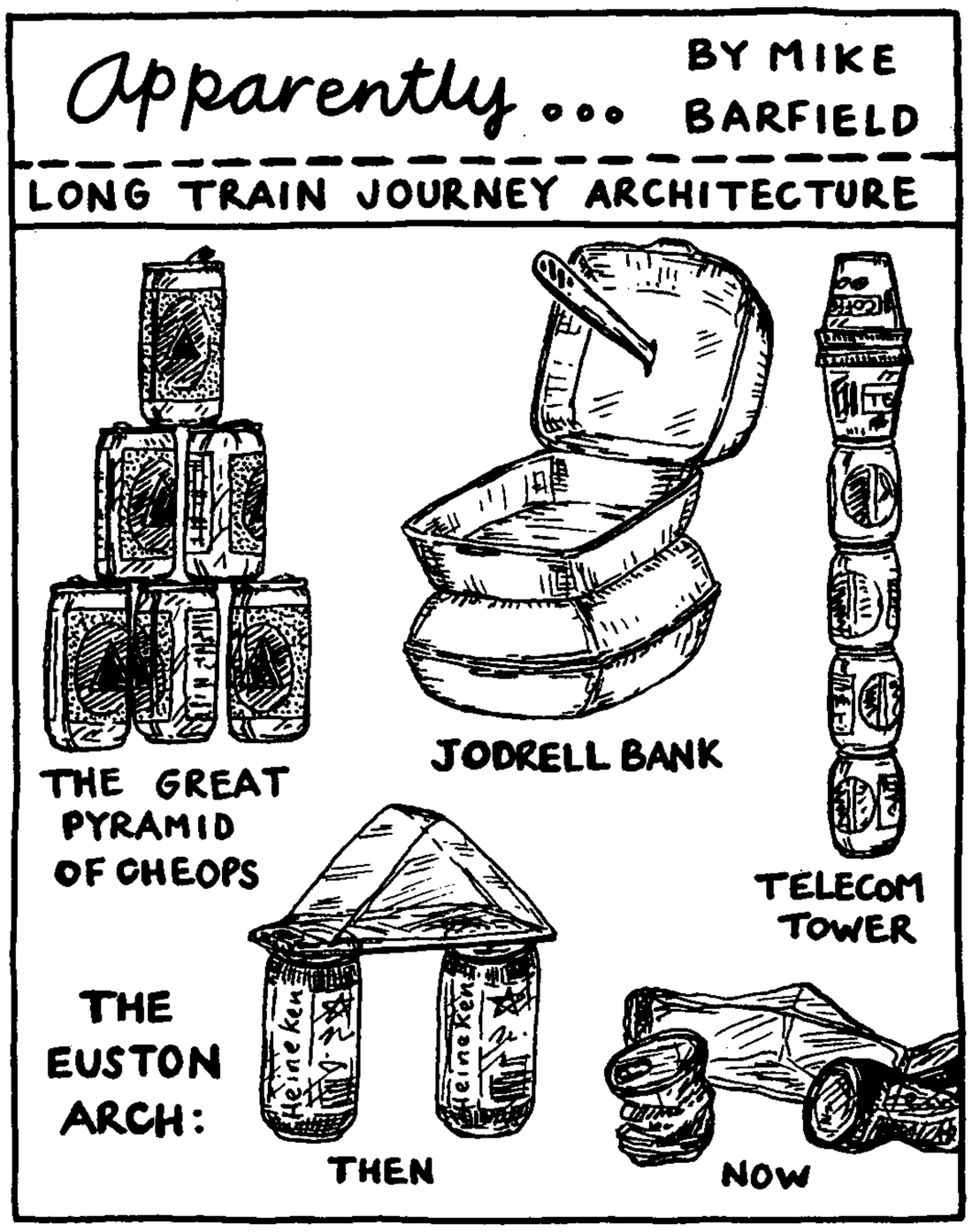
As details of the unpredictable Gallic goal machine's resignation emerged, Neasden fans (Sid & Doris Bonkers) held back their tears to pay their own tribute to the player they called simply "The Big-Headed French Git". Sobbed Sid: "We have a saying here — 'When Eddie doesn't play, Neasden lose.' Unfortunately he was banned for life after trying to guillotine a Dollis Hill fan for not kissing the ground he walked on, and therefore Eddie never played for us at all."

LATE SCORE

Yoplait Inter-Nations World Cup Summer Charity Vase

Neasden 0

Yachtclub Racing Boys of Ganz . 7
(Bostic 2, Uhu 1, Pritt 3, Pevsner [o.g.] 1)



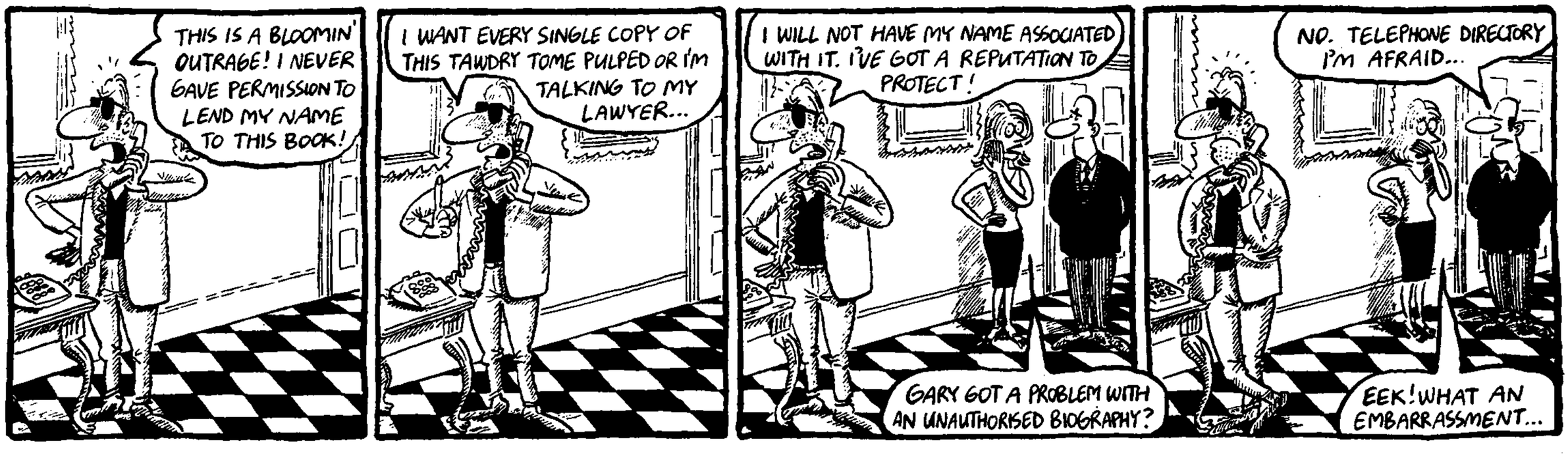
THE ALTERNATIVE VOICE

This week: **Dave Spart**, Co-Chair of the Rap Against Racism, Gender Discrimination and Foxhunting Alliance, Tower Hamlets.

IT has not taken long for the fascist Blair to emerge in his true colours, ie as a total and complete fascist and racist in his treatment of Comrade Sarwar, the first democratically-elected member of the Muslim community to be democratically elected as a Muslim MP. It is totally sickening to witness the hounding of Comrade Sarwar by a kangaroo court on trumped up charges, eg innocently giving away his money to a fellow Muslim as part of a cultural tradition which paternalist imperialists like Prescott and Mandelson cannot begin to comprehend, er, when Sarwar's only crime is the colour of his skin, ie black, and the nature of his religious faith, ie he is an Islamic Muslim. It is a totally sickening disgrace that in 1997 a member of Britain's oppressed millionaire community can be
(contd p.94)

Celeb

LIGGER


THIS IS A BLOOMIN' OUTRAGE! I NEVER GAVE PERMISSION TO LEND MY NAME TO THIS BOOK!
I WANT EVERY SINGLE COPY OF THIS TAWDRY TOME PULPED OR I'M TALKING TO MY LAWYER...
I WILL NOT HAVE MY NAME ASSOCIATED WITH IT. I'VE GOT A REPUTATION TO PROTECT!
GARY GOT A PROBLEM WITH AN UNAUTHORISED BIOGRAPHY?
NO. TELEPHONE DIRECTORY I'M AFRAID...
EEK! WHAT AN EMBARRASSMENT...

IT'S BACK!

NEW LABOUR, NEW HANZ-Z-Z-ARD

New Prime Minister's Question Time. 3 p.m.

Ms Renata Anglepoise (Tunbridge Wells, New Lab): May I just ask Tony, I mean the Prime Minister *(Labour cheers)* how it feels to have won such a brilliant victory in the recent election, and does he agree that, from now on, things can only get better?

Mr A. Blair (Sedgemore, New Lab): I would like to thank the Member for Tunbridge Wells for her acute analysis of recent events and to thank her for being one of the many thousands of new women MPs who will, I am sure, bring a wholly new, civilised tone to our proceedings in this House. *(Thousands of New Labour women MPs scream "Tony! Tony!" and ask for his autograph)*

Dame Boothroyd *(for it is still she):* Order! Order! Remember where you are. Please remember the dignity of this House!

Ms Patsy Jacket (Billericay, New Lab): Can I ask the Prime Minister whether he would agree that the use of landmines is totally unacceptable to a civilised society?

Mr A. Blair (Sedgefield, New Lab): I'm glad you were told to ask me that question, Patsy. Now that you mention it, I do happen to have here a ten-point plan for the total ban of all landmines, except, obviously, all the ones the Chinese make. *(Prime Minister reads out long statement lasting for most of the available parliamentary time)*

Ms Stephanie Twigg (Portillo East, New Lab): Can I ask why there isn't a proper unisex hairdresser in this place? All we've got is a sexist male chauvinist barber who had the nerve to ask me whether I wanted something for the weekend.

Mr Alan Clark (Kensington and Legovia, Con): I'll give you something for the weekend, darling! *(Tory cheers and cries of "Clarkie for leader!")*

Mr Dennis Bolsover (Skinner, Lab): What I would like to ask this so-called Labour Prime Minister is why the first thing he does is to grovel to the capitalists and bankers by privatising the Bank of England to fat-cat gnomes in Zurich like Eddie George? *(Labour cries of "Oh really!" "Grow up, Dennis!" "We're not living in the Middle Ages!")*

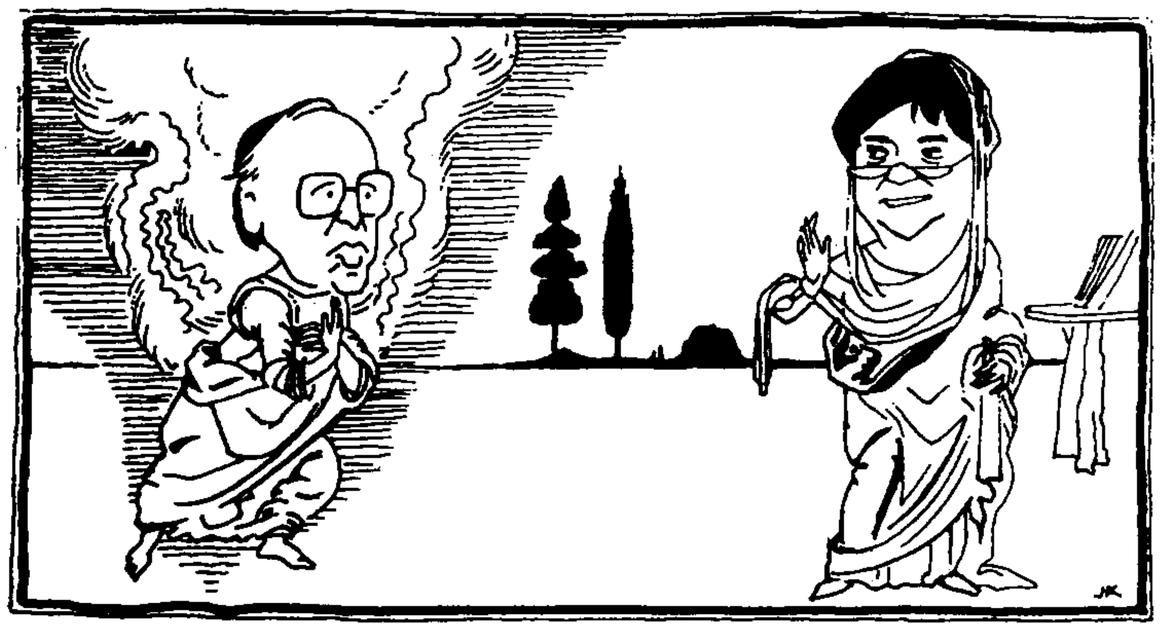
Mr A. Blair: I don't think under our new rules that I have to answer that question! *(Labour cheers. Entire backbenches begin singing "Things can only get getter")*

Dame Boothroyd: Order! Order! Wouldn't any of the Tories like to ask a question? Come on, come on! I'm sure some of you have got something to ask Mr Blair. He won't bite you!

Mr J. Vulcan (Redwood, Con): Would the Prime Minister agree that Mr Clarke and Mr Hague and Mr Howard are utterly useless and spineless and would be really hopeless as leader of the Conservative Party, and would he also further agree that there is only one sensible candidate for that office who is capable of re-uniting the party round a policy of taking us out of Europe and onto Mars? *(Tories all start fighting amongst themselves)*

Mr P. Ashtray (Pantsdown Lib Dem): Could I remind the Prime Minister that my party is now bigger than ever... pivotal role... proportional representation... penny on income tax... hung parliament... *(House empties)*

© New Hanz-z-z-ard: "Things Can Only Ge More Boring".



Lives of the Saints

No. 94: St Ann of Widdecombe

AND IN those times there lived a pious virgin whose name was Ann. And Ann took no care of her person, believing all paints and other self-adornment to be but empty vanities. This holy maiden devoted her days to the welfare of prisoners, building more and more prisons to house them and providing much-needed shackles for those female prisoners who were in labour.

But, after many years working in this wise, Ann encountered the devil himself, incarnated as a petty ruler set over her — by name the Lord Howard. For a time she held her peace, meekly accepting all the tasks which Howard laid upon her. But the day came when Howard sought to rise yet higher, and to become one of the most powerful men in the kingdom. Then God appeared to Ann in a vision and said unto her: "Now is thy chance. Put thy boot in and really stitch him up. Go on, thou knowest thou will enjoy it."

And the blessed Ann spent many hours in prayer and fasting, meditating on how she might best carry out the Divine Will and drive the foul fiend from out of the land. And, behold, there came to her in her cell a clerk from the Anglo-Saxon Telegraph (edited by the Venerable Charles Moore). And Ann cried out: "There is something of the night about Master Howard."

And when he read this, the Lord Howard went pale and began to quake, even unto his boots. And with a demonic shriek of "Lo! I am undone!", the fiend vanished in a puff of sulphurous smoke and was seen no more in the land. And from that day forth, Ann was renowned for her powers of exorcism and was held by all to be a saint.

NEXT WEEK: Swampy, the Holy Hermit of Manchester.

LORDS TO BE SAVED

by Our Medical Staff
Lionel Barts and **Barts Simpson**

ONE of London's best-loved institutions, the House of Lords, has been given an unexpected reprieve by the new Blair government.

For centuries the Lords has offered a haven for the old and mentally unstable looking after them and providing day-care facilities for generations of elderly people.

A Labour spokesman said last night: "There *were* plans to shut down the Lords and replace it with a modern hospital *(shurely 'second chamber'? Ed.)*, but we suddenly realised that one day we would be old ourselves and we will need a warm place to go in the afternoon."

Lord Hattersley is 103.

DIARY

It was by the Grace of the Lord that we found ourselves seated around a cordial dinner table with Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, only sister of Britain's Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth Two.

"Have you sinned, Honey?" I asked my wife when the invitation arrived in our ordinary family home.

"I swear before the Lord I have not, Billy," she replied, "But why do you ask such a question?"

"For why else, Honey, would we be denied dinner with Her Majesty, and be forced to make do with her sister? Let us fall to the ground and pray for mercy!"

We had been uncertain what clothes to don for such an occasion, so we prayed to the Lord for guidance. He suggested lounge suits with sober neckties and well-polished shoes, plus wrist-watches spun of the finest gold.

That meal taught me a lot about myself, and about the awesome responsibility of communicating a message. I had been seated next to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, mother of Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, sister of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth Two, a wise and kindly lady, with a deep warmth and intelligence in her eyes. Rarely had I felt so enhumbled.

"Your Grace," I said, as coffee was served, "I have a message for you from my friend President Nixon."

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother looked at me attentively.

"He says: 'The old cow will never lose weight if she don't cut back on the choccies'. I think it must be what we in the Bible call a *parable*."

As if the hand of the Lord had reached down and touched her, that fine old lady lay down the bittermint she had been fondling. It seemed at that moment that the President's prayer had indeed been answered.

It was only on my return to the States that the President told me this had been a personal view, not to be passed on to the lady concerned.

Alone with him in the Oval Office, I put my arm around the Presidential shoulder. "The pining heart cannot feast upon the unwrapped mint," I told him, "For it hungers to touch something greater."

BILLY GRAHAM

The President nodded gravely. He then dipped into a drawer, awarded me two medals and told me that, truly, I was the wisest Christian he had encountered. I told him he was the seventh President who had honoured me in this way, and that his Democratic rival for the Presidency, also a decent, God-fearing man, was planning to award me three medals. Out of the goodness of his heart, the President then awarded me a further four medals. Never had I felt so truly humble in the presence of the Lord.

"Mr Chairman, could we pray?" I put my arm around the shoulders of Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. I was privileged to be a personal guest in his beautiful Peking home. I noted that the Chairman and his good lady behaved just like any other ordinary decent American couple, sharing the chores. Whoever wasn't doing the washing-up was in charge of supervising public denunciations.

"What you like to pray?" Mao replied, warmly. "Me very good prayer of Gin Rummy, Ludo or ancient Chinese game Mah Jong."

Chairman Mao was a cordial host, a family man and a keen golfer with a charismatic personality. Not only was he a first-class conversationalist but he could also speak Chinese. There were a few streaks of gray in his black hair, and it was beautifully brushed. I sensed the Lord was looking over him.

I am not denying there had been rumours that under Mao's firm governorship, many millions of men and women had passed away. On hearing this, I fell to the ground in prayer to the Lord. Without His special hand guiding me through life, I might have been born a Chinaman, and I too might have become one of the victims of Mao's famous Cultural Revolution. Instead, I was privileged to be dining off local specialities on his beautiful mahogany dining-table, delivering goodwill messages from my close personal friend, President Nixon. Truly, I had been hand-picked by the Lord! Through the darkness and the fog I shall walk with you, oh Lord, to be with you when I dine at the tables of the great.

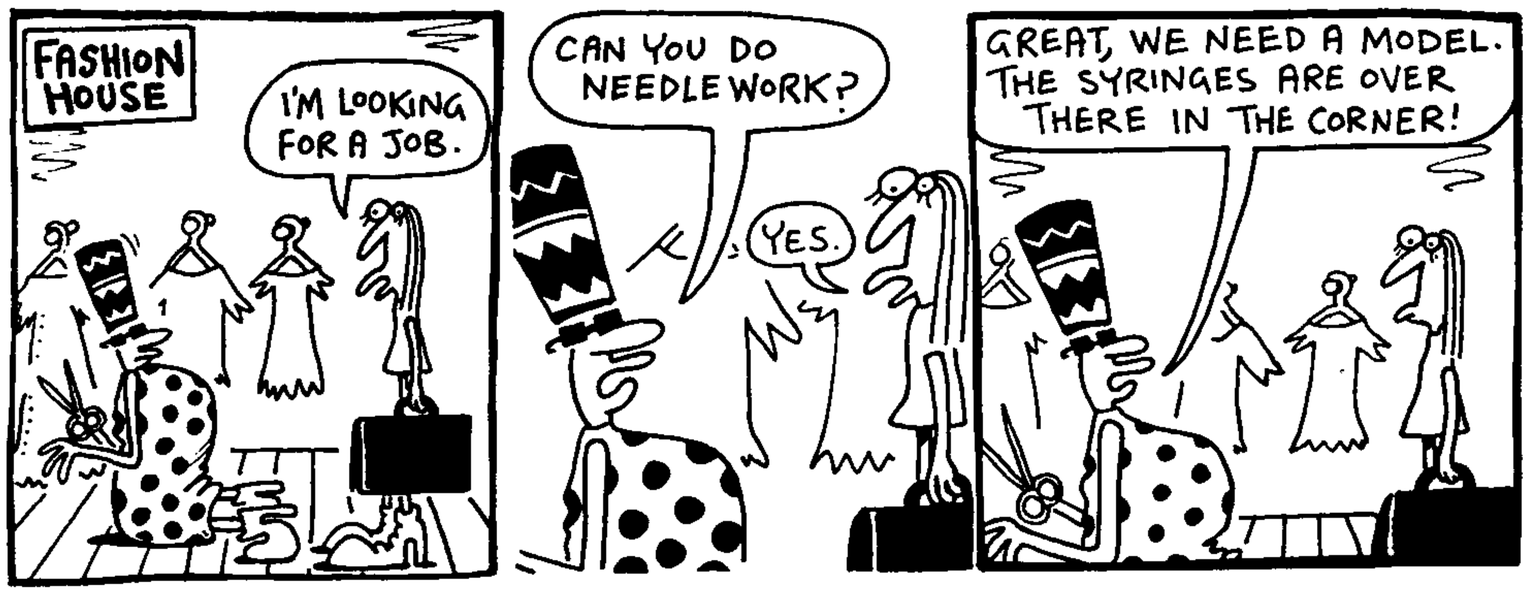
Talking of hair, my own hair waves naturally to our Lord and Master. For He granted me a fine head of hair — described by President Johnson as one of the finest heads of hair he had ever witnessed on a professing Christian, also admired by President Kim il Sung — and, by the power of His earthly blow-dryer, I have been able to maintain it in a luxuriant, billowing manner. For millions of Christians around the world, the waves of my hair stand as living testament to the waves the Lord parted thereby letting Moses and the tribe of Israel enter the Promised Land. Truly, people have a hunger for a special kind of year-round cleanliness, and the All-New Billy Graham Three-in-One Bible Institute Shampoo and Conditioner is already making waves.

"We give thanks to you, Oh Lord, for providing we, your people, with such a magnificent team to take your beloved country, America, forward into the future." This was my solemn prayer in the Oval Office of the White House as the newly elected President Richard M. Nixon, Vice-President Spiro Agnew, Bebe Rebozo, Bob Haldeman and myself all dropped to our knees to give thanks to the Lord for guiding the hands of His fellow Americans in this, their most important decision.

I have been a close personal friend of every President since the last World War. Like all great men, they seek the advice of the Lord through His chief executive. "Billy," they ask me in time of crisis, "What shall I do?" To which I make it a rule to look them square in the eye and reply: "Stand firm, Mr President, *stand firm*". We then enjoy a magnificent luncheon followed by full-colour photographs on the White House lawn. Grant me the strength, Oh Lord, to follow Thy path, through this harsh and downtrodden furrow Thou hast asked me to plough. And the President sends his regards. Amen.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


FASHION HOUSE
I'M LOOKING FOR A JOB.
CAN YOU DO NEEDLEWORK?
YES.
GREAT, WE NEED A MODEL. THE SYRINGES ARE OVER THERE IN THE CORNER!

Glittering gala honours the Great White Whale

Literary Review

Modern Media Dons No. 94: Lisa Jardine

THE media don has made such an invaluable contribution to our national humour over the past couple of decades that it's always a pleasure to welcome a new recruit to the platoon — all the more so in that this is traditionally a boy's outfit run from Oxbridge common rooms.

Almost at a stroke, though, the ageing hegemony of Professors Carey and Eagleton, and more recent irritants such as Dr David Starkie and Professor Anthony Easthope, has been cast aside and a new star risen up to displace them. The last 12 months, in fact, have been Professor Lisa Jardine's *annus mirabilis*.

Starting out with a hugely excitable book about the Renaissance, which envisaged the 15th century as a glorified version of *Exchange & Mart*, this pageant of self-promotion has since taken in brisk little spats about traditional stagings of Shakespeare (tedious and irrelevant, natch) and appearances on every Radio Four chat-in you care to name, before culminating in the chairpersonship of the committee chairing the Girl's Own Orange Prize for fiction.

It's in this latter guise, however, that Prof Jardine — who when not bending the nation's ear is alleged to teach English at Westfield College — has whomped up the biggest storm, in the course of a few well-chosen remarks about the state of the English novel. It had come to her attention, Jardine pronounced — apparently transfixed with the glorious novelty of the revelation — that modern British fiction (Mart, Graham, Julian and Co) was terminally washed up. Cosy, provincial, undernourished and all the rest of it. "English writers should look further afield, look at worldwide issues for their subjects." And wasn't it a pity that we didn't write like those burly, brooding Americans?

Leaving aside the mass disparagement which these remarks have already attracted in the national press, one might start by wondering just how keen an eye Prof Jardine has been training on the state of lit crit in recent years. After all, mid-Atlantic trendies were muttering this kind of thing 20 years ago. Does anyone recall a chapter in D.J. Taylor's *A Vain Conceit* (1989) called "Modern American Style", whose purport could be fairly summarised as "We're crap. They're not". James Wood, to name only one contemporary critic, has fashioned a whole career by pointing out just how feeble and spineless anything written in the Home Counties looks when set against an account of cattle-rustling in Montana.

So, one out of ten for originality. Quite apart from the jejune nature of the proceedings, the whole transatlantic comparison line is largely redundant these days. Never mind the presumed crapness of modern British writing (and here Prof Jardine has a point), the other side of the equation just won't stand up. Ten years ago — five even — you could have made out a pretty fair case for the superiority of Americana to the native dish. But as the last *Granta* "Dirty Realism" hoedown demonstrated, Yank fiction by the under-40s is in hasty decline, snuffed out by the amalgam of weirdness and derangement that now does service as American Yumour.

Never mind, this debate will run and run. Its only immediate interest — other than showing once again what fools university professors tend to make of themselves when they sound off in public — is to point a speculative finger or two in the direction of the Orange Prize's probable winner. At this distance E. Annie Prolix — I mean Proulx — one of Prof Jardine's faves, looks a dead cert. How curious then, that her books, set in northern backwaters and backwoods, are the quintessence of *American* provincialism.

FOREIGN BODIES

NO DOUBT about it, Lisa Jardine would love Caryl Phillips, one of that increasingly large tribe of "Commonwealth writers" (Phillips was born in St Kitts) whose mission it is to agonise about the mother country.

Phillips' big thing is exile. On the publication of his last novel, *The Nature of Blood*, he was moved to observe how greatly he empathised with the Jews, so much so that he often felt he *was* a Jew. (Reviewing it, Hilary Mantel told him not to be so silly, on the grounds that the Jewish experience is unique to Jews, and that we devalue it by somehow imagining we can share it.)

Phillips' new anthology, *Extravagant Strangers* (Faber, £15.99), belongs to the school of thought which wonders whether English literature really exists at all. If you look closely, you see, it all turns out to have been written by foreigners, and the book has a fine old time demonstrating that Thackeray, Orwell and Kipling were actually born beyond the native shores they were later so rapturously to reclaim.

In fact the idea for a collection of "immigrant literature" is a decent one, and the extracts (modern contributors include Penelope Lively, William Boyd and both Naipauls) look to have been chosen with care. What disfigures it, alas, are a) some grandly didactic lead-ins in which the reader is told how he ought to respond in advance; b) brown-nosing of the kind that can describe a whingeing piece of pre-1983 general election journalism by Salman Rushdie (which ought to have been titled "How dare these people vote Conservative?") as "a confident and elegant argument"; and c) truckloads of inaccuracies. The Rushdie biographical synthesis is a case in point: "His first novel, *Grimus* (1979)..." 1975, actually. "In 1989 Rushdie published *The Satanic Verses*..." Only a year out this time. "In 1991 Rushdie published *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*..." Ditto. And so on through Timothy Mo, Romesh Gunsekera and even Thackeray, whose contribution Phillips characteristically mis-attributes.

As ever, you fear — a lesson Prof Jardine might learn to her advantage — good intentions are no substitute for accuracy.

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

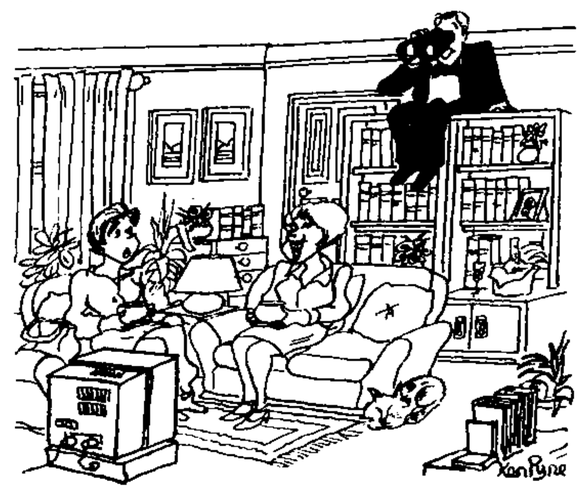
ROBERT BAUVAL and Graham Hancock have moved to Michael Joseph (see *Eye* 924) despite the efforts of their agent, Bill Hamilton, to get them published by his wife, Hutchinson publisher Kate Parkin.

Meanwhile another author who most certainly is not going to be published by Parkin is Robyn Sisman, former Hutchinson md. Sisman was sacked from Hutchinson in 1992 when she was eight months pregnant. So she wrote a novel, *Special Relationship*, which contained a portrait of a creepy agent and his voraciously ambitious wife.

The couple were nothing like Hamilton and Parkin; but, as the novel was full of real-life models it was hard not to make comparisons. Sisman's next novel will be published by Michael Joseph.

'Bookworm'

WORLD OF OPERA



GÜMMERDÄMMERUNG: TWILIGHT OF THE NOBS

LORD CHADLINGTON, aka Peter Gummer, has responded sensitively to the suggestion of a conflict of interest in his roles as chairman of the Royal Opera House and former chairman of the lottery advisory panel of the Arts Council, which in 1995 lobbed £78m of lottery money into the Royal Opera House (see *Eye* 895).

He has appointed as ROH chief executive his old friend Mary Allen, former secretary-general of the Arts Council. Thus the two people most responsible for dishing out lottery millions are now feverishly spending it. Strangely, the new job was not advertised and nor was Mary Allen interviewed for it. She replaces Genny McIntosh, whose reforming ideas for the Opera House were widely approved by ROH staff. McIntosh's departure "on health grounds" is still shrouded in mystery.

Allen's appointment has been greeted with great rejoicing at the Arts Council, where she was mysteriously known as "Thatcher". Arts Council executives insisted she should leave at once. At the ROH, however, a letter to heritage secretary Chris Smith demanding McIntosh's reinstatement and an inquiry into the workings of the ROH board has been signed by almost everyone.

When Chadlington arrived to address 400 ROH staff on 18 May, he was greeted by a strange hissing noise. Almost all unionised staff at the Opera House are balloting to strike against Chadlington's proposals to make them work harder for less pay.

PS: Chadlington is a close friend of John Major and was knighted by him in 1996.

PPS: He is chairman of the PR proup Shandwick, which advised the Tories during the election campaign; and his brother is John Selwyn Gummer MP, Major's former environment secretary.

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I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
SHE'S TOO RICH FOR ME!

footnotes

Wimpey burghers

HOW should big building companies behave when their plans are frustrated by elected representatives?

Paul Garber, the chief planner of Wimpey Homes, got very cross when a Tory council turned down Wimpey's plans to build 34 homes on a rather a small site at Mytchett, Surrey. He got even crosser when his appeal to a department of environment inspector was turned down as well.

When Surrey Heath planning committee rejected another proposal for 29 houses on the same site, he got very cross indeed, and when that decision too was upheld on appeal he became positively apoplectic. What annoyed him beyond endurance was that the council officials had all supported his plans. The trouble, he believed, was being caused by tree-loving elected councillors obsessed with the environment.

He fired off a letter to the planning director angrily accusing councillors of anti-Wimpey prejudice. He singled out the Tory council leader Vivienne Chapman and a Liberal councillor on the committee, David Whitcroft. The councillors, he alleged, were not doing their duty by following professional advice. He warned of further appeals and a public inquiry, adding: "It will also be our intention to write to the district auditor, as we believe the said councillors should be surcharged for the costs to be attributed to that action."

Wimpey's applied again to build the same number of houses on the site. On 1 May, even before the councillors had met to discuss his application, Mr Garber was writing to the council demanding access to briefing meetings, complaining of prejudice and threatening once again "to refer matters to the district auditor".

The planning committee met on 12 May and turned down the application by 12 votes to 1. Mrs Chapman abstained. The surcharge threats have been referred by Coun Whitcroft to the Nolan commission on standards in public life.

The *Eye* asked Mr Garber if his letters were a gross and blatant attempt by a large and powerful corporation to intimidate elected councillors with a view to influencing their judgement and their democratic decisions. He replied: "The inference is that we are making a knee-jerk reaction because our planning application has been deferred. This is not the case. Notifying the district auditor is not something we do as a matter of course, nor is it something we would undertake lightly. We geuinely feel that in this instance we have a valid point to raise with the district auditor whose own role is to ensure that elected councillors *do* represent interests by being publicly accountable for *their* own affairs."

A BRIG TOO FAR

BRIGADIER Michael Turner, the traffic commissioner for the south-east and London, controls the licences of goods vehicles of anyone in the area and likes to go about his business in an efficient military manner.

His administrative director has circulated everyone in Kent who has recently been granted a goods vehicle operator's licence. He invites them to a posh Kent Hotel on 3 June where they can hear the brigadier speak on the absorbing subject of "what is expected of the licence holder".

TURNER

Refusal of the invitation could be hazardous. The letter warns: "The traffic commissioner would be disappointed to see any operator before him at a public inquiry who had chosen not to make the effort to attend the evening".

Some lorry owners in Kent are worried that their licences might not be renewed if they don't go to the brigadier's evening and later end up in front of him on a charge. In case they think they can forget about it, they are instructed to reply to the invitation on a special form, and warned: "A copy of your response will be placed on your file".

POLL-AXED

■ **THE decision of the Labour government to set up a single financial regulator has started a furious sectarian war between the three big regulating bodies: IMRO, the SIB and the Personal Investment Authority.**

The PIA starts at a bit of a disadvantage: namely Sir Terence Heiser, a prominent "public interest" director on its board (and simultaneously a director of a regulated firm, Abbey National, see *Eye* 890).

Sir Terence was permanent secretary at the department of the environment from 1985 to 1992 — exactly the period of the rise and fall of the poll tax. In their 1994 book on the tax, authors David Butler, Andrew Adonis and Tony Travers reveal: "In the poll tax saga the influence of the permanent secretary is imprinted in every chapter." The man responsible for a tax so bitterly opposed by Labour ministers is not likely to be their first choice as a new top regulator.

PS: Sir Terence left the board of Costain last year soon after the firm reported a pre-tax loss of £142.6m.

SEE YOU LATER REGULATOR. Sir Terence Heiser

Bahrain humbug!

■ **IN ONE fell swoop the election has swept away the Famous Four Tory MPs who regularly visited Bahrain and spoke up for its oppressive regime and dictator, the amir.**

David Mellor (Putney), Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam), Tony Marlow (Northampton) and, above all, William Powell (Corby) all lost their seats. Even worse for the amir, Jeremy Hanley, the foreign office minister who could always be relied on to emphasise the importance of *good* relations between the British and Bahraini government, has gone too.

Hanley has been replaced at the FO by Derek Fatchett, the leftish Leeds Labour MP. The growing community of Bahraini dissidents who have fled to London remember a stirring speech by Mr Fatchett at a meeting organised by the Council for Arab-British Understanding on 13 March. Fatchett eloquently expressed his "deep concern" about human rights in Bahrain, a matter he said he raised "continuously".

ALL GONE. Powell, Maitland, Hanley, Mellor and Marlow.

As foreign office minister, Mr Fatchett was all smiles and warm handshakes when he met the Bahraini ambassador on 15 May. On 20 May he greeted Sheikh Ali Bin Khalifa, minister of transport in Bahrain and son of the prime minister there. Asked in the House of Commons about the first meeting, Mr Fatchett said: "We intend to have a close and frank relationship with Bahrain. I've had a useful discussion with the Bahraini ambassador on human rights and other issues." Exiles from Bahrain are poring over this text to try to find any difference from what they used to hear from Jeremy Hanley.

THE BRIDGEWATER APPEAL

SECRET POLICEMEN'S BALLS-UP

THE answer to the question asked in the last two *Eyes* – how many of the policemen blamed for the wrongful conviction of the Bridgewater Four will come to court to explain themselves? — is now available. None.

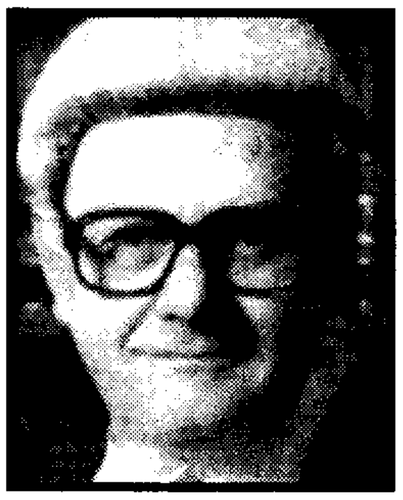
The crown lawyers admit that officers from the former No 4 regional crime squad in the West Midlands forged a confession by one of the Bridgewater Four to extract a confession from another. None of these officers appeared in the men's final appeal, which has just finished; and nor was any explanation for their absence given to the court by the crown QCs Jeremy Roberts and William Coker.

Roberts and Coker spent several days trying to confine responsibility for the appalling miscarriage of justice to this small group of officers. They insisted that the Staffordshire police, prosecution lawyers and all the judges had behaved impeccably. This view got a terrible hammering during the last week of the appeal.

Representing Pat Molloy, whose confession was the lynch-pin of the prosecution, Michael Mansfield QC exposed the role in extracting the confession not just of the regional crime squad officers – but the big chiefs of the Staffordshire police, too.

During the interminable and oppressive interrogation of Pat Molloy the then DCI Weslea Watson had told the frightened suspect: "Vincent Hickey has said that one of you [Molloy or Robinson] pulled the trigger." That statement was completely false.

Watson also asked Molloy: "Did you fire the gun? Well, you know it's been suggested by someone." That statement was completely false. The officer who headed the inquiry, DCS Bob Stewart, told Molloy: "We have been told you were the one who fired the shotgun." That statement was completely false.



TOP COP AND FRIEND. Bob Stewart and Lord Justice Judge

Mr Mansfield went on to show how another set of Staffordshire officers had reported a conversation with Molloy in a car which cannot have taken place at the time stated. Recently disclosed documents show that one the officers was somewhere else at the time. Staffordshire officers of all ranks, said Mr Mansfield, were responsible for the "ring of deceit" which extracted a false confession from Molloy.

Edward Fitzgerald QC, counsel for Michael Hickey, accused two other Staffordshire officers, Clive Williams and Clive Massey, of providing suspect evidence. Michael, then 16, was arrested in December 1978, but on 22 December the director of public prosecutions sent a memo to the police saying there was no evidence to charge the boy. That very afternoon, while Michael was having his fingerprints taken, Clive Williams, then a detective sergeant, burst in to the room and asked Michael about Carl Bridgewater. He asked: "Was the newspaper boy smiling when the gun went off?" To which Michael replied: "No he wasn't."

Although in countless interviews Michael utterly denied having had anything to do with the murder, this short exchange (which Michael anyway denied) was produced by the prosecution as serious evidence of a confession. At the trial, Williams's record of the conversation showed that he had formally cautioned Michael – "you are not obliged to say anything but what you say may be given in evidence, remember that". This caution made the conversation admissible evidence.

A draft report made up by the officers for their seniors at the time, which has only recently been disclosed, does not include the caution. Mr Fitzgerald alleged that the caution may have been deliberately inserted into the record later to legitimise the conversation as evidence. The crown accepted this, but neither of the officers appeared to explain themselves. Yet if the DPP had not had evidence of this conversation, Michael would never have been charged.

The appellants' complaints climbed up higher. Patrick O'Connor QC for James Robinson sharply criticised the second prosecution QC at the 1979 trial, Igor Judge. Molloy's confession could not in law be regarded as evidence against any of the other three men. Yet Mr O'Connor detailed 17 separate occasions where Igor Judge QC dragged the Molloy confession into his cross-examination of Robinson. Robinson was asked, for instance, why Pat Molloy put him at the farm with his gun on the afternoon of the murder. Robinson, of course, who had not been on the farm and knew Pat Molloy hadn't been there either, had no reply. Judge's cross-examination, said Mr O'Connor, broke rules which had been established since 1925 and was "plainly improper". Yet the judge Mr Justice Drake had never objected to it and even joined in. Igor Judge is now a lord justice, only slightly junior to Lord Justice Roch who presided over this month's Bridgewater appeal.

Mr Mansfield pointed out at the end of the appeal that "those representing Robinson" had not objected either. "They might have missed one inadmissible question," he said, "but how could they miss seventeen?" Mr O'Connor criticised Jimmy Robinson's barrister on a wide range of matters.

Mr Mansfield and Mr O'Connor had better be careful that they do not repeat such criticism outside the protection of the court. For Mr Douglas Draycott QC, who represented Robinson at the Bridgewater murder trial, is not a man to ignore an assault on his reputation. Last November the case of Satpal Ram, an Asian who had been attacked in a restaurant by a racist gang, had killed one of his assailants and been convicted of murder, came to the court of appeal. John Silverman the BBC's home affairs correspondent, reported on the *Today* programme that one of the grounds of the appeal was the alleged incompetence of the appellant's trial barrister, Douglas Draycott QC. The appeal and all its grounds were rejected. Draycott, advised by the brilliant and indefatigable lawyers for the Police Federation, Russell Jones and Walker, sued the BBC for libel. The case was settled out of court. The BBC broadcast an apology and paid Mr Draycott £17,500.

S(CAB) out! Official Picket of NACAB HQ, London

CAB rank and file

IF YOU are badly treated by your employer, you can always turn to the Citizens Advice Bureaux whose offices all over the country are trying to cope with an increasing flood of complaints about arbitrary sackings and victimisations.

Be careful though. The headquarters of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) may be closed and the staff may be on official strike – in protest against, er, arbitrary sacking and victimisation.

In February Glenn Sutherland, printer and chairman of the MSF union branch at NACAB who has been a staunch union member at NACAB for 19 years, was sacked for "gross misconduct" – photocopying union material on NACAB photocopiers. The full value of this copying has been estimated at £20.

For some reason very few of the 300 people who work at NACAB think that this is gross misconduct or any form of misconduct. Impertinently they point to the use of the same photocopiers to produce fantasy football material for very important people like the chap who decided to sack Glenn Sutherland, personnel director David Evans.

During the row which has split NACAB since the Sutherland sacking, chief executive Ann Abraham has resigned. David Evans has a suitable nomination for her successor: David Evans.

THIRTY THOUSAND PIECES OF SILVER

Following the piece in the last *Eye* about Tony Blair's office and Lewisham College, estimates have been pouring in about the cost of Blair Day, the day the then Opposition Leader opened the new Ruth Silver House at the college last year. It seems that the day cost about £30,000, with £3000 spent on flowers and £2000 on breakfasts for invited guests. Ruth Silver is believed to be the only college principal in British to have access to her own chauffeur-driven car. Can you guess the colour? Surely you can. Silver.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

NEW Labour convert Anita Roddick, the Queen of Green, appears to be facing a rebellion among her less than loyal Body Shop subjects in France, where franchisees are not over-impressed by the company's performance.

Earlier this month chairman Gordon Roddick disclosed a 14 percent drop in French sales and a £6.5m provision against possible closure costs. Body Shop is looking to close or unload its 32 stores in France and has taken over the operation from the former head franchisee who has run France since 1990.

The official line is that the French problems are due to the recession and unavoidable local difficulties such as strikes and terrorist attacks. That is all true, but angry French franchisees say it is only part of the story. Several franchisees are telling their version in the French courts.

They accuse the Roddicks of a "colonial" attitude (not very "new" Labour) in appointing a British company with no local expertise (or even language) to run the French operation, resulting in a series of avoidable marketing blunders. Body Shop has already become a target for the notoriously sensitive French authorities over its failure to label products in French — something local franchisees point to as indicative of the way the operation has been run across the Channel.

Because those behind the head franchisee, G.W. Management, had been successful running Body Shop franchises in and round Newcastle, it was seemingly assumed that they could repeat the trick in France. But as a result of mistakes by Body Shop International and G.W. Management, cross-Channel critics claim that French franchisees have been badly selected, stores have been poorly sited and run, resulting in a high proportion of closures or take-overs as "company" shops. They also blame a lack of advertising and publicity for helping produce a generally dismal sales performance and now a raft of six-figure legal actions for compensation.

Three claims against G.W. Management for compensation from franchisees are due to be decided by the commercial court in Paris next month.

The franchisees claim the Roddicks have been unresponsive to criticisms about the way in which France was being run by the now terminated British head franchisee until it was too late. No doubt the Roddicks (Ethics 'R' Us) put such comments down to sour French grapes and will deal promptly with any legitimate complaints.

THE law lords and the British government appear to be discreetly passing the buck over whether banker Ewan Launder should be shipped back to a soon-to-be Chinese-run Hong Kong to face corruption charges.

The House of Lords last week overruled the court of appeal and declared that the former managing director of Wardley should be sent back to face charges of taking £4.5m in bribes for loans. But the law lords also suspended any action pending an appeal to the European court of human rights — something which could delay matters well beyond the Peking takeover on 1 July.

New home secretary Jack Straw, whose officials are tasked with extraditing Launder, has accepted this ruling which Eurosceptics might perceive as handing over a purely UK decision to Strasbourg. So, assuming he appeals (and why not?) Launder will sit in prison while Strasbourg decides whether to hear his appeal.

Given the pace at which the court of human rights works, there will be plenty of time for China to confirm Launder's claims that it is a brutal regime which wastes little time on fair trials for those it considers corrupt. If so, then at some later date either Strasbourg or a humane Straw could decide not to ship Launder out — arguing perhaps that he has already done enough time inside (like Malaysian banker Lorrain Osman, who was eventually sent back to Hong Kong only to be released because of time, seven years, already served).

But most important for Britain in the run up to the hand over of Hong Kong to China is that there is no suggestion that Launder's slurs about show trials and executions against the benevolent Peking regime are being supported. Britain can insist that it is doing everything to extradite Launder — even retaining for him alone the old extradition treaty with Hong Kong — while doing nothing. The perfect British fudge.

Meanwhile in the United States, former B.A.T. Hong Kong executive Jerry Lui is also counting the days to 1 July. The US court of appeal ruled in March that he too should be extradited on bribery charges, involving $4m in pay-offs for cigarette shipments, over-turning an earlier decision. This is now under appeal on the ground that the US extradition treaty with Hong Kong expires with the handover and China is unlikely to be too sympathetic to Lui.

How strange if the Americans decided to ship out the Chinese executive to face the none-too-tender mercies of the Peking despots but the Brits and Europeans decided the rich *gweilo* Launder is too precious to send back.

If so Launder will be unable to rejoin his old friend George Tan, former head of the Carrian property group. Wardley and its Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank parent were the major lenders to Tan. The Carrian collapse resulted in the exit of Launder and Osman from Hong Kong. Tan was jailed for three years last year. Unless there is an amnesty for corrupt Hong Kong businessmen, Tan, unlike Launder and Osman, will be there to meet the new masters when they takeover.

"One day, son, all of this will be yooooooouuurs..."

"WE ARE here to test Asil Nadir's version of events," declared fearless fatman Roger Cook as he was driven into Nadir's northern Cyprus mansion refuge. The "disturbing new evidence... that strikes at the heart of British justice" to which the subsequent *Cook Report* (13 May) was devoted concerned how innocent businessman Nadir had been set-up by the SFO whose activities had brought down his Polly Peck empire.

Those, such as the fat one, who had not been paying attention over the past four years might have imagined this was a scandal overdue for exposure. In fact it was simply the song Nadir has been singing since he jumped bail from fraud charges in May 1993.

The unique Cook style of "testing" Nadir's apologia was to allow the fugitive bankrupt to make statements without any evidence other than bought and paid for witnesses such as Michael Francis and Wendy Welsher, who are self-confessed liars. Francis and Welsher first invented the tale that the Nadir trial judge was to be bunged £3.5m by the Nadir family then declared Scotland Yard put them up to it. Why, they have never made clear; and Cook never asked. Nor did he name or confront in classic Cook style the guilty plotters. Much more likely is that Nadir put Francis and Welsher up to it in order to halt the trial — perhaps the reason they fled to northern Cyprus to avoid charges of perverting the course of justice and were sheltered by a man they had tried to frame.

So one-sided was the programme that the unquestioning intrepid investigator found no time to ask the Polly Peck administrators about the £500m shortfall on the £1bn debts, due to a £900m black hole in Turkey and northern Cyprus, which wiped out the shareholders Nadir professes to care so much about. But then they are suing him for £378m he misused. Instead the issue of the Polly Peck crash was simply ignored while Nadir raged on about how he is a victim of police and SFO persecution.

In typical Nadir style the programme concluded with his writing a letter to his former lawyers Vizards instructing them to begin proceedings for abuse of process against the SFO. Doubtless Vizards will wait to be put in funds before they do any such thing and that could be a long wait as any funds Nadir sends here are likely to be snaffled by his creditors.

Nadir concluded it would be "rather naïve" to return to Britain. If anyone was being naïve it was the Fat Man who, rather than the SFO, was guilty of "another massive bungle".

Last year Nadir declared he would return to Britain to fight the fraud charges if the Tories were kicked out. More likely — as his recent trip to Turkey showed — he has his eyes on the Turkish speaking states of Central Asia. And in making a business comeback there as well as in fending off pressure on his high placed Turkish government friends from Britain for extradition, nothing will do better than a showing of the *Cook Report*. No doubt it was a coincidence that he flew to Istanbul the week after the programme.

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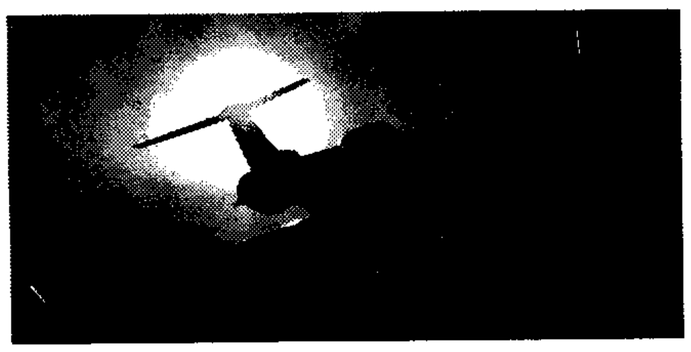

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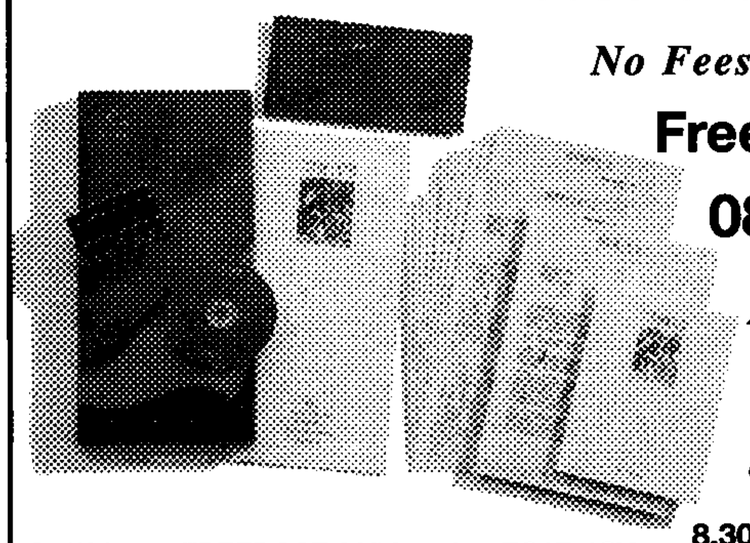

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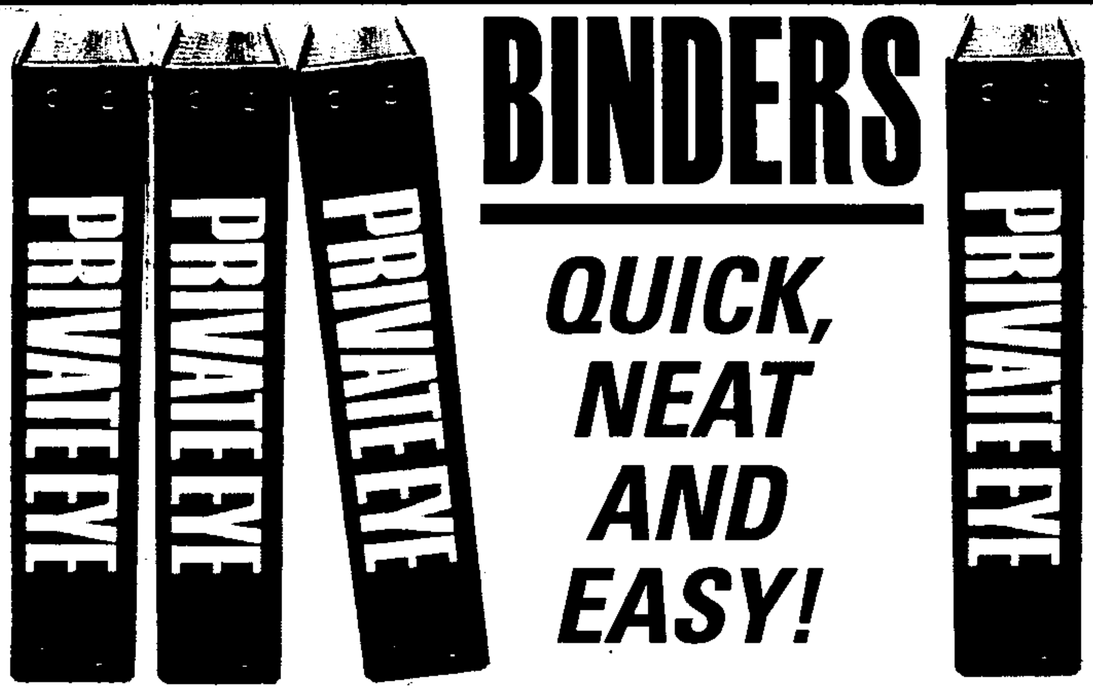

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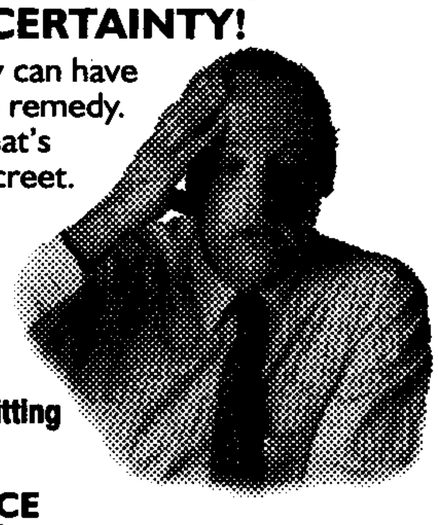

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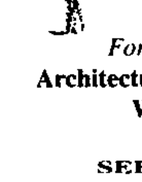

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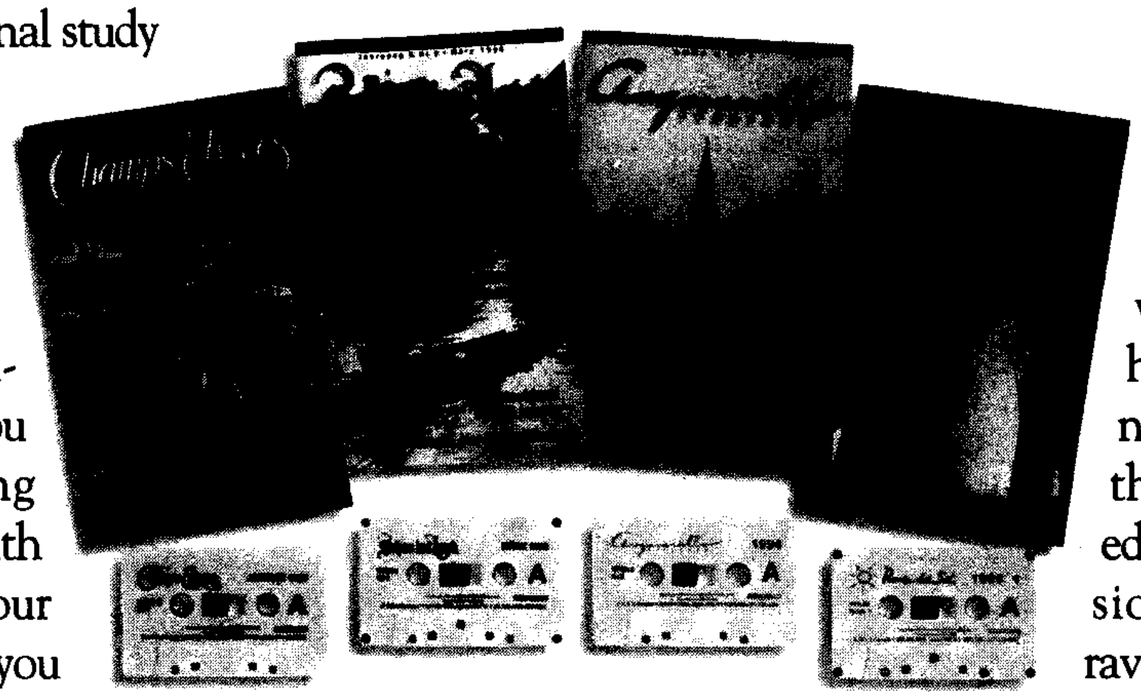

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